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NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2015

The Pope, The Church & Cuba:

Real Reform or Double Standard Socialism?

By Frank Pizzoli

"Although many of Pope Francis' pronouncements have been hailed as 'Progressive,' official Vatican policy regarding LGBT issues has not changed."
-Michael K. Lavers

"Pope Francis has made no changes in official church policy regarding LGBT issues," Michael K. Lavers, International News Editor for the *Washington Blade*, tells *Central Voice.*

Lavers spent endless hours last September covering the Pope's visit to the US.

In May, he spent a week in Cuba reporting on the island's LGBT civil rights movement.

In September, Lavers addressed Cuban issues at Washington, DC's forum Geopolitics of LGBT Rights.

Lavers speaks candidly with CV about both experiences.

In previous reports on LGBT-related activity by the Vatican, CV reported that bishops worldwide, including the Harrisburg Diocese, participated in a 39-question survey on issues of church and family ranging from birth control to gay marriage. Completed by December 2013, the survey "has been distributed to all priests and deacons, as well as other leadership people in the parishes and schools," Victoria Laskowski, the

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PA Competes Campaign

Gay Rights Good for Business

By Frank Pizzoli

Gehler

"It's amazing that 78% of Pennsylvanians support updating the current Human Relations Act to include protections for gay and transgender individuals and that the legislature hasn't done this yet," Sam Gehler, PA Competes field director tells *Central Voice.*

Equally amazing is that a recent survey indicates 73% of state residents incorrectly believe discrimination against gay and transgender individuals in the workplace, housing and business services is already illegal, Gehler explains. Even some legislators, he says, think it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation.

Enter the Pennsylvania Fairness Act.

With a dozen savvy field organizers scattered around the state, Gehler's team is poised to have sexual orientation and gender expression included in the state's Human Relations Act though passage of legislation. The vehicle driving this change is House Bill 1510 and Senate Bill 974, together known as the Pennsylvania Fairness Act. The state's current nondiscrimination law was originally written in 1955 and last amended in 1991. Current categories of individuals protected against discrimination include race, color, religion, ancestry, age, sex, national origin and disability.

The twin bills carry broad bi-partisan support among members of the General Assembly. Co-sponsors are Senators Pat Browne (R) and Larry Farnese (D) in the state Senate and Representatives Dan Frankel (D) and Tom Killion (R) in the state House of Representatives.

Locally, the measure is supported by State Rep. Patty Kim and State Rep. Kevin Scheibner, co-sponsors the of the measure. At press time, there was no clear indication if State Rep. Ron Marsico, State Rep. John Payne, State Rep. Sue Helms, and State Rep. Maureen Gingrich support or not support the legislation.

Jimmy Liacos steps into the picture on the local level.

Originally from Massachusetts, Liacos is PA Competes' Dauphin County organizer. "We are creating awareness about the proposed legislation among the legislators in Dauphin and Lebanon

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God, Art and Free Speech...*Who Knew?* pg 13

Photo courtesy fugly.com

FAB's Fantastic Five Honorees... pg 12

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Political Update

• El Salvador enhances hate crime penalties

El Salvadorian lawmakers have approved two proposals enhancing penalties for hate crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity, says El Mundo newspaper. Web site Sin Etiquetas reports that those convicted of killing someone because of their sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, political affiliation or gender would face a sentence of between 30-60 years in prison. Those convicted of threatening a person because of their sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation or gender would face between 3-6 years in prison. Andrea Ayala, executive director of Espacio de Mujeres Lesbianas por la Diversidad, a Salvadoran advocacy group known by the Spanish acronym ESMULES, noted to the Washington Blade the passage of the proposed amendments is the first time that lawmakers in the Central American country have approved something that "expressly" extends protections to people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. "This is a historic step forward without precedent," said Ayala. Anti-LGBT violence remains pervasive throughout El Salvador, which has one of Latin America's highest murder rates.

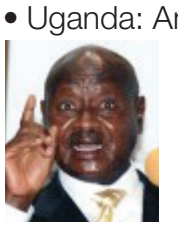
• "When I wear high heels, my soul soars."

There are no official statistics on the number of transgender people in Russia, but experts put the number at around 15,000 across the country – about 0.1% of the population. A documentary produced by the Moscow Times on Moscow's transgender community, Hurdles, tells the tale of transgender individuals. Vika is one of them. "Those who see me for the first time at the steering wheel are surprised how a lady can operate such a huge truck," explains Vika, a 48-year-old driver who works on a construction site in Moscow. For Vika, there's no Russian equivalent of Caitlyn Jenner to relate to. Instead, like so many transgender Russians she's forced to keep a low profile, worried about the discrimination she could suffer at the hands of a society that struggles to understand what being transgender really means. I wanted to fit the public opinion that your genitals define who you are. I married and had kids, but nothing changed. She didn't intend to be a truck driver. Vika worked in a beauty salon for eight years before it closed, and subsequently spent a long time looking for work. In her most desperate days, she even resorted to selling her body, an experience she describes as as shameful and terrifying. Finally, she found her current job, where she says her boss is very supportive. "Once a couple of colleagues wanted to beat me up for being a transgender person. After my boss found out about it, he fired them immediately."

• Chilean Cardinals Block Gay Nomination

The *Washington Blade* reports that leaked emails to a Chilean newspaper show two cardinals conspired to prevent a gay man from being named to a sex abuse commission that Pope Francis created. In 2014, Santiago archbishop Cardinal Ricardo Ezzati wrote to his predecessor, Cardinal Francisco Javier Errázuriz concluding that Juan Carlos Cruz's nomination to the commission "would be extremely serious for the Chilean (Roman Catholic) church." Cruz, who now lives in Philadelphia and is the head of global communications for DuPont Crop Protection in Delaware, is among the hundreds of people who Rev. Fernando Karadima sexually abused in his parish in El Bosque, a wealthy neighborhood in the Chilean capital, over more than three decades. Cruz told the *Washington Blade* that he did not know that Collins had nominated him to the commission until his emails were published.

• Uganda: Anti-gay Law "not necessary"



Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni on Saturday said an anti-gay law he signed last year was "not necessary" because his country already bans consensual same-sex sexual relations. The Associated Press reported that Museveni told reporters in Tokyo that the Anti-Homosexuality Act "was not necessary because we already have a law which was left by the British which deals with this issue." Museveni in February 2014 signed the statute under which those convicted of repeated same-sex sexual acts faced life in prison. His decision to sign the Anti-Homosexuality Act sparked outrage among LGBT rights advocates in Uganda and around the world. The Obama administration in June 2014 announced the U.S. had cut aid to Uganda and imposed a travel ban against officials responsible for anti-LGBT and other human rights abuses in the East African country. The Constitutional Court of Uganda less than two months struck down the Anti-Homosexuality Act on a technicality.

NATIONAL

• It's in the Email

With about 7,000 pages of presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's now released by the State Department, Clinton's emails reveal an interest in LGBT issues during her time as Secretary of State in the Obama administration. Emails sent or received throughout 2009 and 2010, reveal discussion of Uganda's infamous "Kill the Gays" bill, efforts to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," international LGBT rights, her 2010 Pride speech before LGBT State Department employees and Clinton's video for the "It Gets Better" project. In an email made public July 1, Clinton writes, "we should emphasize LGBT rights" when discussing reported human rights abuses against gay men in Iraq.

• It's in the Bag

California voters likely will have a chance in November to decide whether porn actors should have to wear condoms in films made in the state. Many in the porn industry are fighting the idea, reports Seth Hemmelgarn. The proposal, which is being pushed by the Los Angeles-based AIDS Healthcare Foundation, needs 365,880 valid signatures to be on the state ballot in 2016. AHF and its allies announced Sept. 14, which was the filing deadline, that they would be submitting 557,136 signatures of registered voters. "Unlike most politicians, voters are not squeamish about this issue, seeing it as a means to protect the health and safety of performers working in the industry," AHF President Michael Weinstein said, predicting victory. "It's only fair that adult film performers be afforded the same safeguards as other Californians in their workplaces."

• Beavers Intros "Natural" Marriage Law

Tennessee lawmakers Sen. Mae Beavers, R-Mt. Juliet, and Rep. Mark Pody, R-Lebanon, recently introduced the "Tennessee Natural Marriage Defense Act." They had promised some sort of legislative response after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled same-sex marriage legal for every state in the country. They believe their bill voids the Supreme Court decision and continues to define marriage under Tennessee law as a union between a man and a woman. "Natural marriage between one (1) man and one (1) woman as recognized by the people of Tennessee remains the law in Tennessee, regardless of any court decision to the contrary," the bill states. "Any court decision purporting to strike down natural marriage, including (a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision), is unauthoritative, void, and of no effect." In 2006 Tennessee voters overwhelmingly supported an amendment to the constitution that banned same-sex marriage. It's unlikely the bill would be found constitutional if passed.

• Democratic Platform Equality Act Expected

Chris Johnson, *Washington Blade,* reports that Democratic National Committee Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz said she "would expect" the upcoming 2016 Democratic Party platform to include support for the Equality Act. "I would expect so. I can't envision our platform not including that," Wasserman Schultz said speaking to LGBT reporters during an LGBT gala for the DNC in New York City's Gotham Hall. "I'm confident that we have a resolution standing up in support of the Equality Act," Wasserman Schultz said. "The rights of the LGBT community are the central civil rights issue of our time, and they are an extremely important part of our party. I would assume we take every opportunity to draw a contrast with Republicans, and to back up our brothers and sisters and emphasize how important their rights are. "The DNC chair also said she "100 percent, absolutely" expects the Democratic Party to oppose the Republican Party on the invocation of religious liberty to enable anti-LGBT discrimination, saying those efforts are already underway. The Equality Act would add sexual orientation and gender identity to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Fair Housing Act in addition to sex in other categories of the code where it was previously unstated.

• Obama Appoints Lesbian Advocate

Chris Johnson, *The Washington Blade,* reports that President Obama has appointed a lesbian advocate to a council with partnering with faith-based organizations. Lanae Erickson Hatalsky, vice president for the social policy and politics program at Third Way, was among the 18 appointees named to the President's third Advisory Council on Faith-Based & Neighborhood Partnerships. The council is intended to bring together religious and secular leaders as well as experts in faith-based and neighborhood organizations. According to the White House, the council focuses on efforts to reduce poverty and inequality, including delivery of services by faith-based organizations to low-income people. In 2001, former President George W. Bush formed the Office of Faith-Based & Community Initiatives, which was criticized for alleging violating the Establishment Clause under the First Amendment by using tax money to fund religion. Upon taking office, Obama reformed the office, renaming it and creating an advisory council composed of both religious and secular leaders.

• Obama Nominates Gay Army Secretary

President Obama nominated openly gay defense official Eric Fanning for the position of Army secretary. If confirmed by the Senate, Fanning would become the first-ever openly gay person to serve in a Senate-confirmed role as head of the civilian side of a military service. Fanning had previously served as head of the civilian side of a military service as acting Air Force secretary, but that wasn't a Senate-confirmed role and terminated after the Senate confirmed Deborah Lee James as Air Force secretary. Currently, Fanning is acting under secretary of Army, which is an appointment that many observers saw as a stepping stone to an upcoming nomination as Army secretary. Republican presidential hopeful Mike Huckabee slammed President Obama's choice of an openly gay official to lead the Army as an attempt at "appeasing America's homosexuals."

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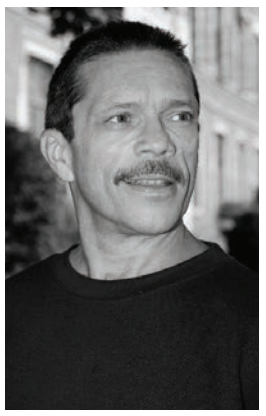
CORRECTION:
In the Sept-Oct issue, *Central Voice* incorrectly identified Harry Young, president, Gay and Lesbian Chamber of commerce, as "Andrews" in a photo caption on p. 26. Our apologies.

publisher's voice

It's Time to Protect Transgender Rights



Frank Pizzoli

The recent senseless death of 22-year-old Kiesha Jenkins in the Hunting Park section of Philadelphia makes the fight for transgender civil rights even more urgent. A disturbing August 2015 Time.com headline read: Why Transgender People Are Being Murdered at a Historic Rate. This must stop. At the time of the headline, the number of transgender people murdered in the U.S. was at a historic high of 15. Jenkins' death marks the 21st homicide for the year.

Even with the recent media attention to Caitlyn Jenner, the situation remains dismal for many non-celebrity transgender individuals. In January, Barack Obama became the first president in U.S. history to use the word "transgender" in a State of the Union address.

"As Americans, we respect human dignity, even when we're threatened," he said. "…That's why we defend free speech, and advocate for political prisoners, and condemn the persecution of women or religious minorities, or people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. We do these things not only because they're right, but because they make us safer."

What role can the LGB community play in helping to protect transgender people?

Former Susquehanna Township resident Mara Keisling, CEO, National Center for Transgender Equality says, "These are all characteristics of people in the United States who are more susceptible to violence," says the Center's Mara Keisling, "of people who are more marginalized economically and educationally, people who end up having a bullseye on their back."

The legal victories and increased media coverage of LGBT people in recent months has been largely positive for the community, Keisling told Time. But the heightened visibility has also put more people at risk of being harassed or hurt. While images of Caitlyn Jenner receiving a standing ovation accepting an award in a Versace dress might seem to herald a sunny time for transgender Americans, most of them are still greatly disadvantaged socially and economically.

"Right now we're experiencing a Dickensian time, where it's the best of times and it's the worst of times at once," says transgender rights advocate Masen Davis, who formerly ran the Transgender Law Center. "We're seeing a marked increase in the public awareness about transgender people and really incredible progress for trans rights, especially from a legal perspective. At the same time, we still represent and are part of a community that experiences incredibly high rates of unemployment, poverty and violence," says transgender rights advocate Masen Davis, formerly of the Transgender Law Center.

Transgender people are four times more likely than the general population to report living in extreme poverty, making less than $10,000 per year, a standing that sometimes pushes them to enter the dangerous trade of sex work. Nearly 80% of transgender people report experiencing harassment at school when they were young. As adults, some report being physically assaulted trains and buses, in retail stores and restaurants. Greater awareness has not yet translated into broad acceptance, says Kris Hayashi, executive director of the Transgender Law Center: "The majority of society does not understand who transgender people are in ways that lead to the violence and the murder and the harassment that we're seeing."

The risk is even greater for transgender women of color, who

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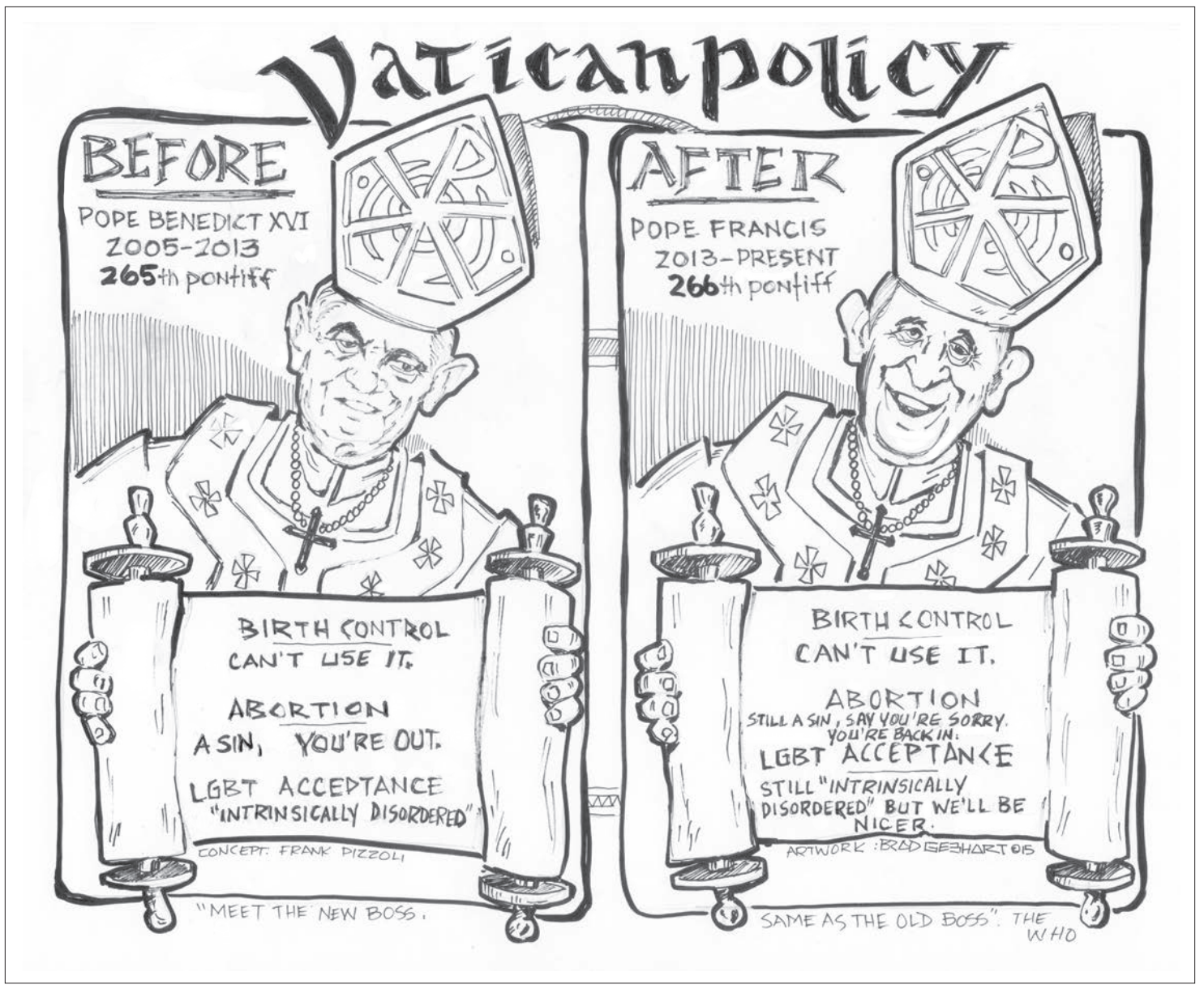


BRAD GEBHART

Union Hypocrisy on Retirement?

Submitted by The Commonwealth Foundation

For years, government union leaders have attacked 401(k)-style reforms to the current pension system as "risky," "inferior," "bad for employees," "fiscally irresponsible," and "unfair to workers." They've lobbied against reform in Harrisburg, bashed 401(k)s in House and Senate testimony, and relentlessly urged their members and the public to oppose defined contribution and hybrid plans like Senate Bill 1.

But it's "do as I say, not as I do" at the largest public unions in the state: The Commonwealth Foundation has uncovered that Pennsylvania's government unions—PSEA, SEIU, UFCW, AFSCME, AFL-CIO, AFT-PA, and PFT—provide 401(k)-style retirement plans to their own employees.

"This is just rank hypocrisy," commented Matthew J. Brouillette, a former teacher and president and CEO of the Commonwealth Foundation. "While union leaders bad-mouth 401(k)s for teachers and other public employees, they are providing the very same type of retirement plans to their own staff. Either they're knowingly mistreating their own employees, or they understand that 401(k)-style plans are best for workers and employers and have been opposing beneficial reforms."

Retirement plans government unions offer their own employees

Union	401(k)	Defined Benefit
PSEA	X	X
SEIU	X	X
UFCW 1776	X	
AFSCME 13	X	
AFT-PA	X	
AFL-CIO PA	X	
PFT	X	

Source: U.S. Department of Labor form 5500 searchable database https://www.efast.dol.gov/portal/app/disseminate?execution=e1s1

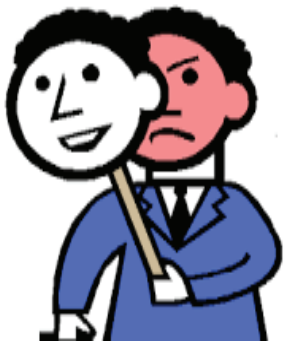
"If 401(k) plans are so 'irresponsible,' 'unfair,' and responsible for 'increases in poverty among seniors,' then why are these unions forcing them on their own employees? Why aren't these union leaders leading by example and offering their own employees defined benefit plans exclusively?" continued Brouillette. "The truth is, when taxpayers are footing the bill for defined benefit plans, union leaders are all for them. But when unions are paying the bill themselves, suddenly 401(k)-style plans become the wiser choice.

"Ironically, PSEA President Michael Crossey recently characterized the latest proposed pension compromise as 'the same old political games' that Pennsylvanians are 'sick and tired of.' In a way, Crossey is right. Pennsylvanians are sick and tired of the PSEA's political games that use taxpayers, teachers, and other public-sector employees as pawns to advance harmful policies. It's time for union leaders to explain their hypocrisy."

Sample of government union public statements opposing 401(k)s

PSEA Resolutions: "The Association opposes any effort to convert to a defined contribution pension plan. The Association also opposes the creation of a two-tiered retirement benefit plan." [But the PSEA offers its own employees a two-tiered retirement plan.]

PSEA Voice magazine: "Legislative committees last spring approved 401(k)-type plans. These proposals spit in the face of research and experience in other states that have shown 401(k)-style or defined contribution plans are more costly to administer, and provide far inferior benefits for most annuitants." [Then why does PSEA offer such plans to its employees?]



Senate Testimony of SEIU 668 President Tom Herman: "Over time, defined benefit pension plans work better than 401ks." "We would adamantly oppose such pension proposals [401(k)s] for new employees that dramatically cuts retirement security and increases costs by billions of dollars." [Then why does SEIU provide 401(k)s to its employees?]

Senate Testimony of AFSCME 13 Executive Director David Fillman: "Despite rhetoric to the contrary, a defined contribution plan is bad for both employees and taxpayers." [Then why aren't they bad for AFSCME employees and AFSCME?]

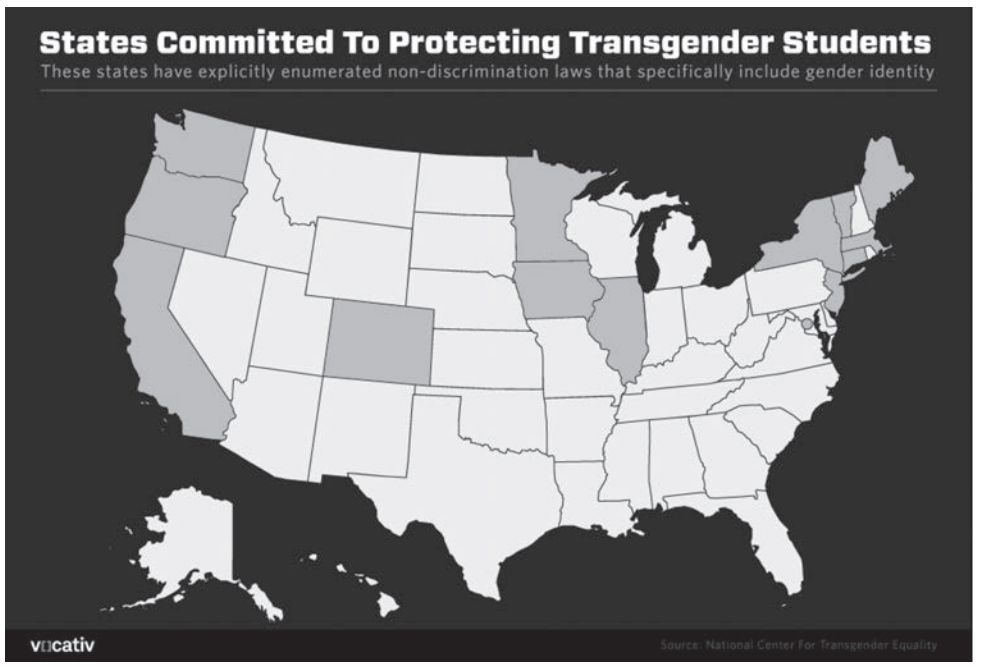
House Testimony of AFT-PA President Ted Kirsch: "Under a defined-contribution plan, new teachers, college faculty and state and school employees would have to save substantially more during their careers to achieve the same level of retirement security."

"[M]oving from a defined-benefit plan like PSERS and SERS to a defined-contribution plan (like a 401K) increases poverty among seniors." [If true, how does Mr. Kirsch justify only providing a 401(k) to his employees?]

"Abandoning defined-benefit pension plan in favor of a defined- contribution plan exposes taxpayers to greater expense." [How has AFT-PA avoided this "greater expense" and why couldn't the taxpayers also avoid it?]

House Testimony of AFL-CIO Pennsylvania President Rick Bloomindale: "The working men and women of the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO support defined-benefit pension plans and reject efforts to expand defined-contribution plans within our state and the nation."

"Switching our employees to a 401(k)-style retirement plan would be fiscally irresponsible and unfair to workers." [How is the AFL-CIO's 401(k) both fiscally responsible and fair to its employees, and why couldn't the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania do the same?]


States Committed To Protecting Transgender Students
These states have explicitly enumerated non-discrimination laws that specifically include gender identity
vocativ
Source: National Center For Transgender Equality

Protect Transgender Rights *cont'd*

often grapple with both transphobia and racism. Sixteen of the at least 20 LGBT people murdered in 2014 were people of color, according to the NCAVP; 11 were transgender women, and 10 were transgender women of color. "People who are marginalized both because of their race and being transgender, it's like a double whammy," says Shannon Minter, legal director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights.

These figures likely don't give a full picture of violence against the transgender community. Though a federal hate crimes law requires the collection of some statistics related to violence against transgender people, experts are dubious about the numbers they're getting. "A lot of jurisdictions report zeroes, even in places where we know there are hate crimes," Keisling says. Most state laws don't require the collection of such statistics, according to Minter.

He says numbers are often misreported too. Incidents may not be determined to be hate crimes because there was no investigation, for instance. Crimes against transgender men like Brandon Teena—who was raped and murdered in Nebraska before his story was told in the film Boys Don't Cry—may be recorded as crimes against women because many don't have the money (or desire) for medical intervention.

The NCAVP, which collects the most complete figures on hate crimes against LGBT people, notes that the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimated there may be 40 times more hate crimes occurring nationally than the FBI reports. Overall, the NCAVP has been receiving far fewer reports of hate violence toward the LGBT community in the last two years, down to 1,359 incidents in 2014. But they say this is a result of the collection process, not "an actual decrease of bias-based violence," and they say their statistics do not represent exhaustive national numbers.

"We all have a responsibility to stop this violence," he says, "and that means if you see a transgender person being harassed, we all have an obligation to speak up, to do something," says Shannon Minter, legal director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights.

That's where our local GBT community comes into the picture. Speak up. Do something. Attend the Fri. Nov. 20, 5:30 p.m. memorial event on the steps of the Capitol of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, where members of TransCentralPA, along with friends, allies, community leaders, and legislators will gather to remember the lives of transgender identified persons brutally killed during the preceding 12 months.

> *"I've been embraced by a new community. That's what happens when youre finally honest about who you are; you find others like you"*
>
> *- Chaz Bono*

BRAD GEBHART

Political Update *continued*

• Clinton Campaign Appoints Liaison

Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton has appointed Dominic Lowell, 29, as LGBT liaison in her bid for the White House. Lowell, who will direct LGBT outreach, most recently served as director of strategic partnerships for Rock the Vote where he worked with more than 100 progressive movements. Among the groups with whom he worked were youth and field-based organizations; state-based groups and coalitions; technology corporations; the voting rights community; and election administrators. Before his tenure at Rock the Vote, Lowell was vice president of investment services at Democracy Alliance. He is one of several members of the Clinton campaign who identify as LGBT. Others are Campaign Manager Robby Mook, Deputy Political Director Brynne Craig and National Finance Director Dennis Cheng. A D.C. resident.

• Court Allows Married Student Tuition

Fourth District Court of Appeal sided with a gay student who applied for in-state tuition rates based on his marriage to a Florida resident. Citing the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark July decision in Obergefell v. Hodges, recognizing same-sex marriage as a constitutional right, the state appellate court sided with student Gildas Dousset in his bid to be classified as a Florida resident based on his Massachusetts marriage to a same-sex partner.

Dousset, a French citizen living in the U.S. on a student visa, applied to the undergraduate program at Florida Atlantic University in November 2013 looking to major in international business. He'd studied at Broward College since 2009 and planned to transfer to FAU. He had lived in Florida since 2009 with his spouse Paul Rubio, an American citizen and travel writer he met in France and married in Boston in 2013.

• Drug Prices Raised, Then Lowered

New York Times reporter Andrew Pollack writes that the price for a life-saving drug used for HIV patients went from $13.50 a Tablet to $750 overnight. Then in another overnight move, he lowered the price to above the $13.50 price but promised a significantly lower market price than $750 per pill. Martin Shkreli, former hedge fund manager and founder of Turing Pharmaceuticals, raised the price of Daraprim after acquiring the drug. Specialists in infectious disease are protesting a gigantic overnight increase in the price of a 62-year-old drug that is the standard of care for treating a life-threatening parasitic infection. The price increase hikes the annual cost of treatment for some patients, often paid for with tax dollars, to hundreds of thousands of dollars. "What is it that they are doing differently that has led to this dramatic increase?" said Dr. Judith Aberg, the chief of the division of infectious diseases at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. She said the price increase could force hospitals to use "alternative therapies that may not have the same efficacy."

• Open Transgender Military Service

A new national survey shows a majority of Americans support open service by transgender people in the U.S. military. The results were released by University of Illinois Springfield Survey Research Office and were part of a survey aimed at "gauging attitudes towards transgender inclusive policies in health and healthcare, K-12 education, U.S. military, and in prisons." The study found: "Overall, there is some uncertainty of U.S. Military policies on transgender persons serving openly in the military. Sixty-two percent of respondents report that they do not know if transgender persons can or cannot serve openly in the U.S. Military. This uncertainty is understandable due to the fact that the U.S. Military is currently undergoing a policy change and may be moving to dismantle the ban on service by openly transgender Americans. This policy is supported by the majority of Americans with 54 percent of respondents reporting that they support allowing transgender persons to serve openly in the U.S. Military and 58 percent supporting other military branches adopting the U.S. Air policy that states transgender airmen and airwomen will not face "separation" — release from active duty — for openly identifying as transgender or receiving a diagnosis of gender dysphoria. In addition, 66 percent of respondents report that there is no medically valid reason to exclude transgender persons from US military service."

• 2/3 of American Catholics Pro-LGBT

Even though as he arrived in Philadelphia last September for the World Meeting of Families, Pope Francis said transgender individuals cannot serve ad godparents. Meanwhile, a recent Pew Research Center study indicates that American Catholics are found to be open to nontraditional families. In many cases, Catholics say families led by same-sex couples are just as good as the historical Catholic ideal of a married man and woman. The majority of American Catholics are open to children being raised by same-sex couples, with 43 percent saying same-sex couples as parents would be just as good as any other arrangement for raising children. Another 23 percent say the arrangement is acceptable but not ideal, while 27 percent find it unacceptable. In total, that's 66 percent of American Catholics supporting LGBT families. But the old Catholic ideal has not vanished. Notably, American Catholics favored same-sex couples as parents over single parents or divorced-parent homes. Only 38 percent of respondents found single-parent homes to be just as good as other arrangements and only 31 percent found divorced parents to be acceptable. And the study found that the more often respondents went to Mass, the less likely they were to be in favor of LGBT-led families.

• Museum Focuses on LGBT Rights

Leaders of Atlanta's Center for Civil and Human Rights are focusing on historic civil rights that includes the LGBT community as a way to ensure LGBT rights, particularly in southern states. The museum includes galleries on LGBT issues and connects its history to the civil rights movement. But officials heard from LGBT organizations and individuals who wanted more, and they began planning the new project last fall. "It's the perfect time and the perfect place to shine a spotlight on issues that don't often get a platform," museum spokesman Ryan Roemerman said. "It lets other people know that this is about human rights for all people — whatever identity you have or labels others associate with you," she said. Details still are in the works, but organizers have settled on three broad areas of focus: education and employment, public health and wellness, and criminal justice and safety.

Positive Thoughts:

Passing the Test

By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

Getting tested for HIV nowadays is a snap. In the era of over-the-counter rapid in-home testing, I'm befuddled why so many gay men, especially young guys, lack awareness of their HIV status.

I suppose part of the answer, at least for young guys, is plain old feelings of invincibility. All young and young-minded folks share in those feelings.

Perhaps, for some guys, not knowing gives them license to say they're HIV negative, since for all they know they are. For others, perhaps not knowing insulates them from any potential pain of a positive result.

I could keep that list going, but the point is that countless reasons exist for not knowing. Many of those reasons may even seem reasonable. Well, I'm here to tell you that no reason you can come up with is a good one.

Maybe you're just a procrastinator. No matter. I'm a world-class procrastinator myself. Procrastination isn't a good reason. Being fine with getting tested in theory but delaying doing so in practice is only asking for trouble.

Knowing your HIV status is crucial. If you test negative, you have incentive to stay that way. If you test positive, you can start the process of staying healthy. Better to know now than to be blindsided later.

Although I've been living with HIV for more than two decades, I still remember what it's like to get tested for the virus. The fear is understandable, but it shouldn't stop you. Your health is paramount.

I passed my first HIV test with flying colors: *Negative.* At the time, I had just turned 21 and boy was I psyched. I was cleared for duty, so to speak, as well as legal to drink. Watch out world, here I come.

However, I was more careful this time around. Before that test, I hadn't always adhered to the condom rule, although I knew the risks. Now that I was given this reprieve, I was determined not to squander it.

A year later, I failed my second HIV test: *Positive*. I found out the day after my 22nd birthday. My commanding officer in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve read my diagnosis from a script. Cold, but tactful.

I knew the positive result was correct, but denial took over. I retested twice before accepting the reality of my situation. At that moment, I started believing that I was going to die before I turned 30.

It was 1992. Effective HIV treatment wouldn't arrive until 1996 and AIDS-related deaths were still increasing. The death of my boyfriend in 1994 only increased my fear that I wouldn't live much longer.

Fast-forward over two decades. Turns out I'm still here and I plan on being here for a long time. Failing that HIV test wasn't the end of the world, but I must admit that I still wish that I had passed it.

I've learned to live with HIV in my body, but the virus remains an unwelcome guest. If the cure for HIV was here tomorrow, I would quickly get in line. I have no romantic attachment to the virus.

I also have no attachment to any resentment about getting HIV. Despite my late boyfriend not telling me the truth about his being HIV positive, I agreed not to use condoms with him. We both shared in that decision.

I'm not alone. Much of why the epidemic continues can be explained by folks not knowing their status and transmitting HIV unintentionally, but also by couples who ditch condoms before they know for sure each is negative.

You could argue that my late boyfriend had a moral imperative

Continued on page 26

World AIDS Day is formally held Dec. 1 but the region's stakeholder organizations are presenting programs throughout the week.

Local Events:

DECEMBER 1

- Screenings for HIV/AIDS, other Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Hep C, Diabetes, Blood Pressure, and a Teen Clinic screening. Speaker is nationally known Dr. Arthur Williams, plus Testimonials, Entertainment (spoken word, dance, singing), and Raffles. Hamilton Health Center, 110 S. 17th Street, Community Room, 4-7 p.m. This event is for the entire family. Contact: Yolanda Edrington 717-232-9971, Ext. 3714 or yedrington@hamiltonhealthcenter.com.

- World AIDS Day, State Capital Steps
Alder Health Services Education & Wellness will host an informational table at the Capitol steps from 3-5 p.m.; then Candlelight Vigil from 5-6:30 p.m. at Capitol for persons living with AIDS, family members, and friends. Personal testimony. check web site for final details or www.alderhealth.org, or call Candace Sillers, 717-233-7190, ext. 224

DECEMBER 2

- All-Day HIV Testing, Alder Health Services, 110 N. Cameron St., Harrisburg, PA, 17110, testing 9 am – 8 pm at Cameron Street site, check web site for details or www.alderhealth.org, or call Candace Sillers, 717-233-7190, ext. 224

DECEMBER 3

- World AIDS Day Celebration and evening social. Theme is "Pearls and Bow Ties." Light refreshments and cash bar; personal testimony from individuals living with HIV; LGBT History Project AIDS Display; table top informational displays from Alder Health Services, Gaudenzia, LGBT Center. Stage on Herr, 268 Herr St., Harrisburg, beginning at 7 p.m. in collaboration with Gaudenzia, LGBT Center, Harrisburg, Foundation for Hope.Tickets $5.

DECEMBER 4

- Special 2015 World AIDS Day live presentation of locally written and produced *Despite These Marks*. Three local theatre and playwright advocates, Josh Dorsheimer, Nicole Weerbrouck and Hal Matroni, have collected real life stories of people surviving and living with HIV - both local individuals and national figures. Their stories are re-enacted on stage. Ephrata Main Theatre, Brossman Building, 124 East Main St., Ephrata. Opening Cocktail Reception, 7:30 p.m, Show, 9 p.m. Proceeds benefit *Despite These Marks,* Alder Health Services, and BCEFA. (Mature subject matter). Tickets $25, http://despitethesemarks.brownpapertickets.com; or http://ephratamain.com/index.php/cafe

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World AIDS Day Event

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- Speaker: Dr. Arthur Williams
- Testimony
- Entertainment
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www.AlderHealth.org

Alder Health Services is dedicated to improving the health of individuals living with HIV/AIDS, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in South Central Pennsylvania. The organization provides residents of the community with: • HIV/AIDS Services and Prevention Programming • Primary Medical Care • Mental Health Counseling Services • STD Screening and Treatment • HIV Testing • Community Health Education Forums and Workshops.

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National Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

"If your love is real, put it to the test."

Nationally recognized Dr. Arthur Williams, chief medical officer, Hamilton Health Center, Harrisburg, hosted a presentation honoring National Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day at the LGBT Community Center, Harrisburg on Sept. 26..

(right) Dr. Arthur Williams, , chief medical officer, Hamilton Health Center, Harrisburg, and Amy Althouse, AbbieVie USLLC Virology.
(above) From left, J. Branch, Yolanda Edrington, Care Coordinator, Hamilton Health Center; Greg, Diane, and Crystal.

Alder Health Hosts PA Physician General

By Central Voice

"Health promotion and disease prevention are critical aspects of public health and very important initiatives for the PA Department of Health," Dr. Rachel Levine told *Central Voice* last July upon her appointment as the state's Physician General. She is also professor of pediatrics and psychiatry at Penn State College of Medicine.

Levine is also a respected member of the region's Transgender community and, by extension, the larger LGBT community. "I believe there is a relationship between acceptance of one's self and positive health outcomes," she said. "It is much better to promote health and prevent diseases than react to illness that are already occurring," she explained.

Alder Health Services is hosting Levine for the community-at-large Tues., Nov. 10, 8 - 9 a.m. at the Sheraton Harrisburg Hershey, 4650 Lindle Road, Harrisburg. Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. There is no charge to attend the event, which includes a full breakfast buffet, thanks to the generosity of Capital Blue Cross.

Capital Blue Cross is the event's Corporate Sponsor.

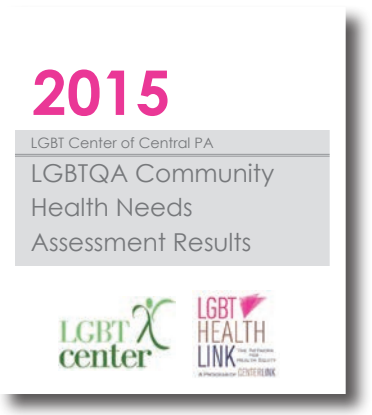
Levine will address the state's public health and disease prevention priorities and how issues related to improving health within the LGBT community are being advanced in the state with a reference on how Alder Health Services plays a role in this process. Her remarks will be followed by a Q&A session.

"Dr. Levine's position on health promotion and disease prevention and Alder Health's mission fit like hand in glove," says Rosemary Browne, AHS CEO. The agency's mission is to improve the health and well-being of individuals living with HIV/AIDS and members of the LGBTQ community by providing a culturally competent and affirming environment that empowers the people we serve.

To attend: Go to alderhealth.org to register online.

Health Needs Assessed, Results Out

By Central Voice



"Our local center surveyed LGBT-identified individuals in the region on their health needs," says Louie Marven, executive director of Harrisburg's LGBT Community Center.

As part of a Pennsylvania Department of Health grant both the local center and the newly-established Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center participated in a pilot program organized by Centerlink, a national community center entity, and state-level health departments.

The June survey attracted 642 respondents over three weeks through a mix of online social media announcements and attendees at Lancaster Pride filling out hard copies of the questions. Respondents represent the eight-county region served by the Harrisburg center, which includes Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, and York counties.

Since the survey was primarily Internet-based individuals without online access are not included in the collected data, as were people who did not attend Lancaster Pride. The survey was English only. As is any survey, the results are a "snapshot" in time. Although the survey may have limitations, Marven points out that "We made a really good beginning. I'm hoping this effort is repeated in future years. Eventually we'll have baseline information from which to plan."

Highlights of the survey reveal:

• ***Sociodemographic Characteristics***

The sociodemographic characteristics of the participants in this sample were similar to the overall demographics of the catchment area of the Central PA LGBT Center, despite LGBTQ participants in this report being conveniently sampled. Nearly two-thirds of the sample identified as gay/lesbian, 15.6% as bisexual, and 13.1% as queer or pansexual. Additionally, 19.6% of the participants were transgender, 36.8% were cisgender men, and 42.1% were cisgender women.

• ***Health Care Access & Quality***

Health care coverage was quite prevalent in the sample (90.6%). More than one-quarter (28.8%) of the sample had a health care provider react poorly to the participants' LGBTQ status—but this varied by gender: transgender people (50.0%) were significantly more likely to have a provider react poorly than cisgender men (24.6%) or women (24.7%). Additionally, transgender people (50.4%) were more likely than cisgender men (10.3%) and women (10.8%) to always or often fear a negative reaction by a healthcare provider. Nevertheless, most participants (79.1%) were out as LGBTQ to one or more of their health care providers.

• ***LGBTQ Acceptance***

LGBTQ participants thought their friends were the most LGBTQ-accepting (83.0% thought their friends were very LGBTQ friendly). Next most accepting were participants' workplaces (46.6%). Schools and birth families were not terribly accepting (37.9% and 35.6%, respectively, of participants thought they were very LGBTQ friendly). Medical providers and neighborhoods were the least LGBTQ-friendly groups.

• ***Overall Health***

About two-thirds of participants reported their overall health status as good or very good. Importantly, participants' self-reported overall health status was significantly greater if they reported greater overall LGBTQ acceptance across all domains. Nearly all respondents were interested in incorporating more healthy living strategies into their lives.

• ***Body Mass Index***

According to participants' body mass index (BMI), 37.7% were obese, and 26.9% were overweight, and this did not significantly vary by gender. Among the general population the state of Pennsylvania in 2013, 30.0% of adults were obese, and 34.5% were overweight (http://stateofobesity.org/files/stateofobesity2014.pdf), suggesting that the LGBTQ population in the sample may be slightly more obese than the general Pennsylvanian population. Importantly, about 3 out 5 LGBTQ participants were interested in health eating (59.5%) and active living strategies (65.0%).

• ***Mental Health Treatment***

In the past 12 months, 39.4% of participants received psychological counseling or treatment. In their lifetime, nearly two-thirds (63.7%) of the sample had taken medicine or received treatment for mental health problems.

HIV among Cisgender Men and Transgender People

Continued on page 25

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RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY

Lying for Jesus:

Attorneys Admit Rally Picture Isn't for Kim Davis

By Zack Ford, Think Progress

At a late September Values Voter Summit, Mat Staver of the Liberty Counsel displayed a picture that he claimed showed a 100,000-person prayer in Peru for his client, Kentucky county clerk Kim Davis. That picture has since been identified as having been uploaded to Facebook on May 25, 2014 and portraying a massive one-of-a-kind five-day convention known as "Jesús Te Ama Y Te Cambia" ("Jesus Loves You And Changes You").

After spending a day defending the photo, Liberty Counsel finally admitted that it is not of a Kim Davis rally. In fact, they no longer claim that any rally whatsoever took place for Davis in Peru, but merely that some people in Peru prayed for her.

Nevertheless, the organization is trying to avoid taking responsibility for the photo, tweeting to Think Progress Sept. 29 that Peruvian Congressman Julio Rosas was the source of the photo and that they were just parroting his claim. Later the same morning, Liberty Counsel issued a new statement addressing the controversy and further scapegoating Rosas for the photo.

"When some questioned whether such a large event occurred, Liberty Counsel sought verification this past Saturday and yesterday," the statement reads. "It now appears that while prayer meetings did occur throughout Peru, the photograph presented to Mat Staver was an honest mistake and was of a different Christian assembly in a soccer field."

This is a change of tune even from a day earlier, Sept. 28, when a different press release claimed that Rosas had confirmed the validity of the picture both on Sept. 27 and again Sept. 28.

Staver has apparently attended several anti-gay and anti-choice marches that Rosas has organized in Peru, which is why he claims that the photo "did not appear unusual because such large Christian gatherings happen much more frequently in Peru." Liberty Counsel still asserts that people in Peru did pray for Davis that Sunday, but now offers no evidence of how widespread that support actually was.

Matt Barber, who also used to work for the Liberty Counsel, similarly defended the photo on Monday on his conservative site BarbWire, but published a correction noting that "Zack Ford and Think Progress appear to have been correct about the questionable nature of this photograph." The site has since crossposted Liberty Counsel's new statement.

Though Staver called the photograph "an honest mistake," he insisted that people still give Davis a thumbs-up everywhere she goes. "Make no mistake, however, that there is widespread support for Kim Davis. Last week she was recognized by many people as she walked through the Philadelphia, New York LaGuardia, and Washington, D.C. Reagan airports. People gave her a thumbs up sign or verbally expressed support for Kim Davis. While she has obvious detractors, Kim Davis also has wide support."

Davis has not traveled internationally during the past few months that her controversy has played out, and thus has likely not received any thumbs-ups in Lima's airport.

Father John McNeill, Pioneer, Dies; Visited Harrisburg

By Andy Humm

Father John McNeill, a Catholic priest, moral theologian, and psychotherapist, whose groundbreaking "The Church and the Homosexual" in 1976 challenged the condemnation of gay love by Church dogma and scripture, died on September 22 in Fort Lauderdale after a long illness. He was 90. He is survived by his husband, Charles Chiarelli.

McNeill visited Harrisburg in the mid 1980s, according to then-Dignity members who recalled his presentation.

While Pope Francis was in the US talking about the "crisis" facing traditional family life, it is McNeill's call for acceptance of same-sex love that is ascendant –– at least among American Catholics.

McNeill's book was both a serious work of moral theology and a rallying cry for gay and lesbian Catholics to accept themselves and be embraced fully by their Church. He dismissed interpretations of the sin of Sodom as sodomy, citing Jesus' own take on Sodom as a town that was inhospitable to outsiders.

"...the Church's attitude toward homosexuality is another example of structured social injustice..."

- Father John McNeill

His 1976 "The Church and the Homosexual" affirmed gay love, a challenge to orthodoxy for which he paid a price

Marianne Duddy-Burke, executive director of DignityUSA, the LGBT Catholic group, said in a written release, "John was really the first major prophet of the Catholic LGBT movement."

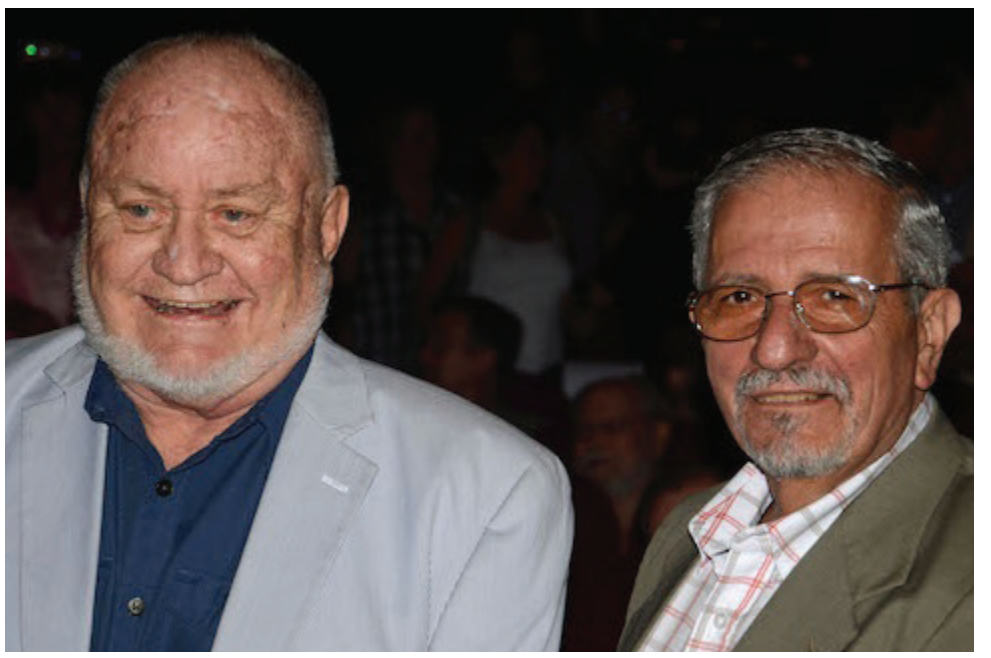
In his book, published with official permission (imprimi potest) of his Jesuit superior after a delay of several years, McNeill wrote that "the Church's attitude toward homosexuality is another example of structured social injustice, equally based in questionable interpretations of Scripture, prejudice, and blind adherence to merely human traditions, traditions which have been falsely interpreted as the law of nature and of God. In fact, as we have seen, it is the same age-old tradition of male control, domination, and oppression of women which underlies the oppression of the homosexual."

McNeill's book landed like a bomb on the rigid Catholic theological landscape and attracted worldwide attention. He appeared on the "The Today Show" and "Donahue" among many nationwide TV programs to publicize his thesis, reaching millions and provoking the Vatican, at the direction of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI), to have him formally silenced –– forbidden to speak out publicly on the topic of homosexuality. McNeill accepted the silencing in the hopes that many other Catholic priests would come out to defend his writings, but that did not materialize.

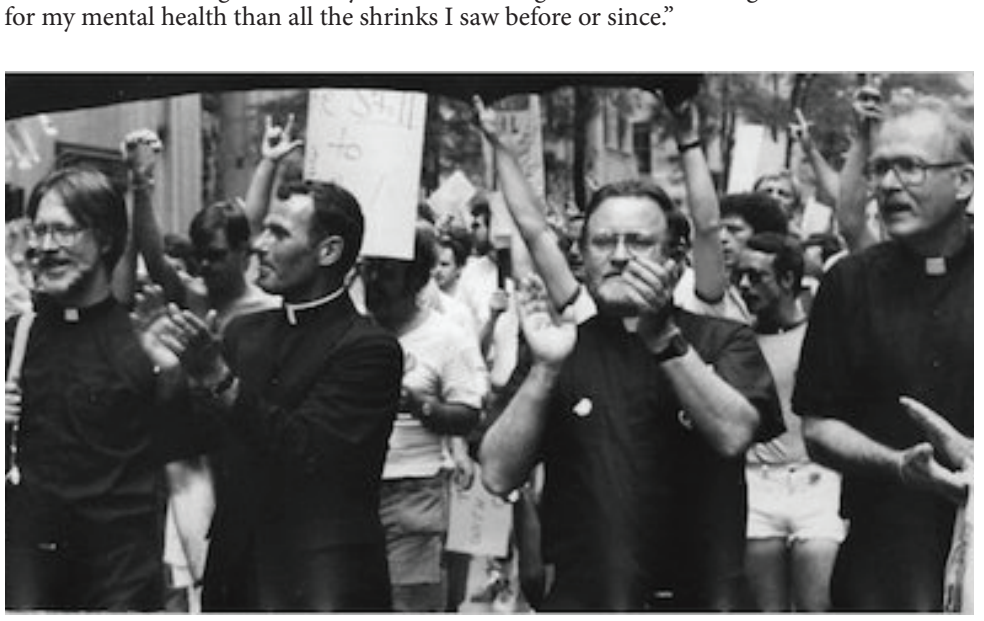
One priest who did risk standing up for gay love was Father Bernárd Lynch, his colleague in the New York chapter of Dignity that McNeill co-founded in 1972 with the late Father Robert Carter, also a Jesuit. Speaking from his London home, Lynch said, "John McNeill deconstructed the Christian scriptures to say there is no justification in Holy Scripture for what is being done to gay people." Lynch said that the word from inside the Vatican was that "the reason John was silenced and eventually expelled from the Jesuits was that he was giving homosexual people too much hope."

Lynch explained, "They were telling us that Sodom was destroyed by homosexual sins of men against angels, but John showed how in fact it was the sin of inhospitality to strangers and how the Church is practicing the very sin of Sodom by being inhospitable. It changed the whole discourse in the Christian Church."

Before meeting McNeill, Lynch said, "The sight of his book being reviewed did more for my mental health than all the shrinks I saw before or since."



Father John McNeill with his husband Charlie Chiarelli, in 2012. *Photo by Garry Rissman*



Fathers Dan McCarthy, Bernárd Lynch, John McNeill, and Robert Carter marching with Dignity/ New York in an early 1980s LGBT Pride Parade in early 1980s. *Photo by Charles Chiarelli*

MCC column

By Rev. Lori Rivera, Pastor
MCC of the Spirit

Just a minute!

You and I are probably pretty much alike. Our lives are probably too busy. We can't remember if we scheduled ourselves for two or three meetings at 10 a.m. on Monday. The more you juggle the more balls people throw at us to keep up in the air. And of course we never think of throwing any of them back.

The more you juggle the more balls people throw at us to keep up in the air.

Life can be overwhelming. I remember my mom often saying, "Lord, just 5 minutes. That's all I ask". She was usually saying this after her own four children plus the two she babysat for and lived next door spent the afternoon in the house because the weather outside was horrendous. Sometimes when someone throws another ball at me to juggle, I want to yell out "Just a minute, just one minute Lord."

Life can also have a great many items on a "to do" list. I even have a "due" app on my phone to help keep track of my "to do" list. This article is on that list.

So instead of reading my thoughts here are some invitations to let you step out of the chaos and put down the juggles for just a few minutes.

The InterReligious Forum of Harrisburg organizes a Thanksgiving Eve Interfaith Service. This year, our 25th service, is at Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament on N. 3rd Street (parking is across from the church, Harrisburg at 7:30pm. All are welcome. The offering received at the service is used to provide college scholarships for Harrisburg High students.

MCC of the Spirit has an annual Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner. Join us for dinner on Nov. 26. Call the church - 717-236-7387 - let us know what you are bringing and how many, come and eat at 2 p.m. and then go home to a clean kitchen.

On Dec. 20, join us for a musical celebration of Christmas. Our annual Christmas Cantata is at 5 p.m.

Then end the Holiday Season with an 11 p.m. Christmas Eve Service; although you might like to come to our Cookies and Caroling at 10 a.m. This is a time to fellowship and sing in celebration of the Birth of Christ.

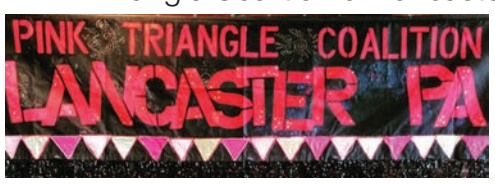
Most of all - I pray that you have a blessed holiday season. That Thanksgiving gives you opportunities to reflect on the things you are thankful for and that Christmas will bring you many gifts of friendship and days of peace.

Blessed Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas!

FAB's Fantastic 5 Honorees

2015 FAB Honorees of the region's LGBT Community Center represent the diversity, individuality, and creativity of the community. Honored Nov. 14 were Pink Triangle Coalition of Lancaster, Marlene Kanuck, Dr. Rachel Levine, Alex Reber, and couple TL Waid and Carla Christopher.

• Pink Triangle Coalition of Lancaster



Advocates formed the Pink Triangle Coalition of Lancaster in the wake of the 1991 bombing of The Closet, a local LGBT bookstore, to make sure LGBT issues stayed in the forefront. Members of this founding group conducted a campaign to educate the public.

The Pink Triangle Coalition of Lancaster was a local organization whose purpose was to promote and support the lives of LGBT people, and to educate the public about the LGBT community through increased visibility and awareness. PTC did this in part by publishing The Inqueery, a newsletter that kept Lancaster's LGBT community informed of social and political happenings. PTC supported lots of community events like youth picnics, roller skating, educational forums, and highway cleanups along Route 23 entering Lancaster.

PTC was especially active throughout the 1990's, and much of its legacy impacts the present-day LGBT community in central Pennsylvania through documentation in the LGBT Center of Central PA History Project archives.

• Marlene Kanuck

Marlene Kanuck has served the community in Central Pennsylvania since the early 90's. While living in Lancaster, Marlene worked to raise funds for the AIDS Community Alliance and was a board member of the Women's Circle, which provided an annual retreat for area lesbians. While on the board, Marlene advocated and accomplished opening the retreat to transgender women.

In Harrisburg, she volunteered as a member of the steering committee to establish the LGBT Center. As the only lesbian on the team, Marlene brought the voice of gender equity to the team. She was a charter board member and served on the board until 2014.

In 2003-05, as a Safe Schools Coordinator at the Department of Education (PDE), Marlene acquired the funding to co-sponsor a collaboration between Common Roads and the PDE. This collaboration produced the first workshops on LGBT youth in Central Pennsylvania which trained over four hundred teachers, school counselors and social workers on safe schools.

Over the years, Marlene took part in many activities including acting in, "Coming Home" a benefit play for Common Roads; working on FAB committees; and even being auctioned off as a date to benefit Common Roads at Trans Central's Keystone Conferences.

In recent years, Marlene has lobbied legislators and spoken at rallies for marriage equality and advocating for LGBT anti-discrimination legislation. She currently serves on the boards of Central Pennsylvania Womyn's Chorus and the Harrisburg Gay Men's Chorus and plans on continuing her efforts to pass a Pennsylvania non-discrimination law.

• Dr. Rachel Levine

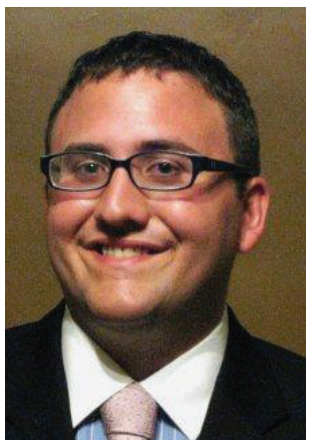
Dr. Levine is currently the Physician General for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry at the Penn State College of Medicine. Previous posts included: Vice -Chair for Clinical Affairs for the Department of Pediatrics and Chief of the Division of Adolescent Medicine and Eating Disorders at the Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital-Milton S. Hershey Medical Center.

Dr. Levine graduated from Harvard College in 1979 and the Tulane University School of Medicine in 1983. She completed training in Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine at the Mt. Sinai Medical Center in New York City in 1988, and was on the faculty of the Mt Sinai School of Medicine from 1988-1993. She came to Central Pa. in 1993, and joined the staff at the Penn State Hershey Medical Center in 1996.

Dr. Levine's accomplishments at the Penn State Hershey Medical Center include the initiation of a Division of Adolescent Medicine and the Penn State Hershey Eating Disorders Program. Dr. Levine was the Liaison for the LGBT community for the Office of Diversity at the Penn State College of Medicine. In that role, she established a LGBT faculty and staff affinity group and was the facilitator for the LGBT student group.

Dr. Levine taught at the Penn State College of Medicine on topics in adolescent medicine, eating disorders, and transgender medicine. In addition, she has lectured nationally and internationally and has published articles and chapters on these topics. Dr. Levine has been a member of the Board of Equality Pa and the Capital Region Stonewall Democrats.

• Alex Reber



Alex has been active in fighting for LGBT rights since college. At Lebanon Valley College he was the President of Freedom Rings, an LGBT student organization. He helped organize against a statewide ban on gay marriage and for passage of a statewide non-discrimination ordinance.

It was during this time he met like-minded people from Harrisburg and became a founding member of the Capital Region Stonewall Democrats. He later served on their board after moving to Harrisburg.

The more Alex became involved in politics, he became interested in making sure that LGBT people had a seat at the table during the governing process. He joined the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund's Campaign Board and worked to elect LGBT candidates to the local, state and national levels. As Chair of the LGBT Caucus of the Pennsylvania Democratic State Committee, he advocated for and helped pass a resolution supporting gay marriage.

Alex's interests in women's issues and accessible healthcare led him to join the board of Planned Parenthood Keystone, which he now chairs. He is the Vice Chair of the Dauphin County Democratic Committee and is an elected member of the Pennsylvania Democratic State Committee. Alex's other community involvement includes serving as an appointed member of the Harrisburg City Audit Committee and on the Leadership Committee of his alma mater, Lebanon Valley College.

Alex works as a Senior Accountant at Miller Dixon Drake, PC. He lives in Millersburg with his husband, Chris Dietz, whom he married last year as soon as it became legal in Pennsylvania.

• T.L. Waid & Carla Christopher

Tameca, or T.L., Waid was the owner/operator of Forever Books from 2003-2005, the Harrisburg region's only LGBT Bookstore. From Forever Books, T.L. grew Waid Books & Promotions and then, with her spouse, Community Arts Ink; independent publishing companies that have given voice to a rainbow of LGBT and minority authors. A tireless volunteer, T.L. helped launch her college's Gay/Straight Alliance, was a caregiver for AIDS hospice patients and has been a volunteer with the center since its early days. Now based in York, T.L. has been a board member and integral voice in Equality Fest, York's celebration of marriage equality, since the festival's inception in 2014.

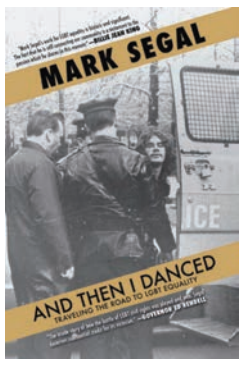
Carla Christopher (carlachristopher.com) is the founder of Equality Fest, a more than 2,000 person arts, culture, and community festival held in York, Pennsylvania celebrating marriage equality. She is also the first ever LGBT person to be selected as Poet Laureate of York and to work in the office of the Mayor C. Kim Bracey where she served as the 2014 Arts & Cultural Community Liaison. Carla hosts "Culture & Main; York's Weekly Cultural Showcase" on WRCT which regularly features LGBT artists and events. Additionally, she works for the York Dispatch newspaper as an LGBT lifestyle columnist. "OUT & About" has posted profiles and interviews with dozens of LGBT activists and organizations and posted LGBT news on the front page more than once. Carla is also heavily involved in political activism and is the Diversity appointee on the Executive Committee for the Democratic Party of York County and the Chair of their Diversity Outreach Committee. Closest to her heart, with T.L. Waid, Carla is the co-director of Community Arts Ink, an independent publishing company which has brought the inspiring voices and stories of more than a dozen LGBT writers to life.

> *"The only queer people are those who don't love anybody."*
>
> *-Rita Mae Brown*

God, Art and Free Speech. Who Knew?

Finally, confirmation that God is democratic. Recently, a group of playful protesters picketed outside Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, expressing their dislike of painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir's work. Local History Flash - Westside Baptist Church appeared in Harrisburg when advocates screened a film about a central Pennsylvania gay youth who committed suicide. WBC elders watched as the clan's two children stomped on the American flag in front of Viet Nam era war veterans there to provide some safe space for attendees. Nearly 800 people from the region showed up to form a peaceful ring around the outer perimeter of the Pennsylvania State Museum before the screening began. (see page one photo)

Memoir Recalls Early Days of Gay-Rights Struggle



Mark Segal's memoir "And Then I Danced" is truly amazing - a walk through gay history by an individual who delivers a first-hand account of events.

Kirkus Book Reviews calls it "[A] swiftly written debut memoir ... [Segal] vividly describes his firsthand experience as a teenager inside the Stonewall bar during the historic riots, his participation with the Gay Liberation Front and amusing encounters with Elton John and Patti LaBelle … A jovial yet passionately delivered self-portrait inspiring awareness about LGBT history from one of the movement's true pioneers."

Publishers Weekly says "The reader can clearly see how Segal's fearless determination, cheerful tenacity and refusal to attack his opponents made him a power broker." Booklist notes that "With great verve and spirit, Segal has rendered a lively and dramatic memoir of the early days of the gay-rights struggle."

Sean Strub, author of "Body Counts: A Memoir of Politics, Sex, AIDS and Survival" says Segals's memoir "is a fascinating page-turner that prompted my tears, laughter, envy and astonishment — but most of all left me feeling very proud of what our community has accomplished and grateful to Mark for sharing his intimate memoir. While there are many who witnessed the extraordinary history of the LGBT community, few played as major a role in creating it as has Mark. It is no exaggeration to say that there is no person alive today who has been a more central participant in as much of the contemporary LGBT-rights struggle than Mark Segal."

Segal is publisher of *Philadelphia Gay News*.

Big Hair Welcome

Take a Christmas vacation back to the 80's. Be sure to bring your big hair, big pads (shoulder, that is) and best bright red dress to celebrate this good time Christmas! Who knows, Nancy herself might even show up for the evening.

The Harrisburg Gay Men's Chorus celebrates the LGBT experience in song and performance, fosters a greater appreciation of the male choral musical tradition, nurtures members in their artistic and personal growth, and enriches the region through entertainment and positive interaction.

Concert dates -

Dec. 4, 7:30 p.m. – First Reformed Church

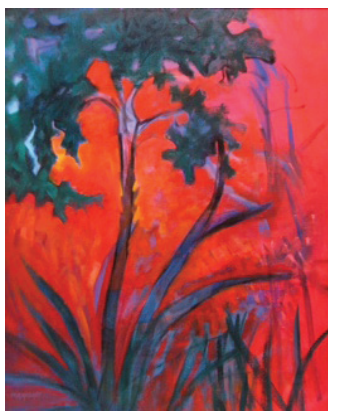
Dec. 6, 4 p.m. – Unitarian Church of Harrisburg, 1280 Clover Lane, Harrisburg

Dec. 11, 7:30 p.m. – Heidelberg UCC, 47 W Philadelphia St., York

Dec. 13, 4 p.m. – Unity Church, 927 Wertzville Rd., Enola

Info: $15 general admission, www.harrisburggaymenschorus.org

"Revéillon" A Holiday Soirée
Saturday, December 5, 5-8 PM,
at the suburban Harrisburg home of
Tracey Meloni. Jazz by Katie Rudolph/
Jim Miller, art by Ernie Gutierrez,
Mary Simmonds, Barbara Gutekunst.
$50 in advance/$55 at door.
Visit www.artassocofhbg.com
for reservations.



"Lost In Las Vegas" Bal Masque

Saturday, March 5 from 6-11 PM
at the Radisson in Camp Hill.
Reservations are $100.

"Architectural Visions"

Now through November 25, with artwork by Gene Pembroke, Sam Sneeder, Jonathan Frazier, Rich Gribble, Carlo DiTono, and the late Wanda Macomber.

Invitational Exhibition

Opening Friday, December 4,
with a reception from 5 to 8 PM,
and featuring works by Louise Herring,
Charlie Hubbard, Rebecca Pollard Myers,
Emmanuelle Wambach, and Marti Yeager.
Music at reception by Jonathan Frazier.

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Recycling Words:

An Interview with Playwright Paul Hood

By Frank Pizzoli

Harrisburg resident Paul Hood is seeing the star of his playwrighting career rise even higher. His next exposure is Feb. 20, 2016 at Brooklyn's Casa De Beverley, a community event space in the heart of Ditmas Park. Hood's "Other Cat" is one of two pieces in the venue's One Acts and Snacks review.

Hood tells *Central Voice* the play is about "two men (roommates) forced to learn about each when they're urged to evacuate their apartment building in Harrisburg's Midtown." The play's central theme is secrets, "ones we often keep from people close to us whether in proximity or in a relationship." The title is a play on the phrase, "let the cat out of the bag."

Hood's plays have long been popular outside the region. The Sequin Royale is a play that derived from an inside joke that then morphed into examining of self-sabotaging ones quest for happiness and fulfillment due to the long-lasting effects of post traumatic stress disorder.

The play enjoyed a staged reading in 2012 at Steamer 10 Theatre in Albany, NY, as well as a staging at Harrisburg's Gamut Theatre. The play has also been read by New Vintage Ensemble at Ale Mary's in Scranton.

My Electric Life debuted at Gamut Theatre Studio and is now slated for production by Theatre of the Seventh Sister in Lancaster in Spring 2016. The play portrays three characters from different walks of life dealing with internet addiction: Manny, a suspected sex addict drawn to the Internet because of the untimely death of his best friend. Ariel, is a lonely redhead with a steely exterior and soft heart wants desperately to find the perfect man. And William: a man stricken with cancer who wants death to come sooner than later because he's been informed by several Internet sites that his diagnosis is a certified death sentence, and that heaven is a better place. The script is facilitated by a calm therapist.

Brighton's Green Street has had a staged reading at Open Stage of Harrisburg and is currently in development with New York City's Stageplays Theatre Company. "I wanted to examine the socioeconomic divide in Harrisburg, which became evident during the latter part of the 1990's. Also, I wanted to show how the changes effected a young, idealistic white couple and an older African American man," Hood tells *Central Voice*.

Aldous Remembers has had a 2011 staged reading at Midtown Scholar Bookstore and has been published by London's Off The Wall Plays (2011). "The story came about when I wanted to examine how memories and love are connected," Hood explains. END

About Paul Hood

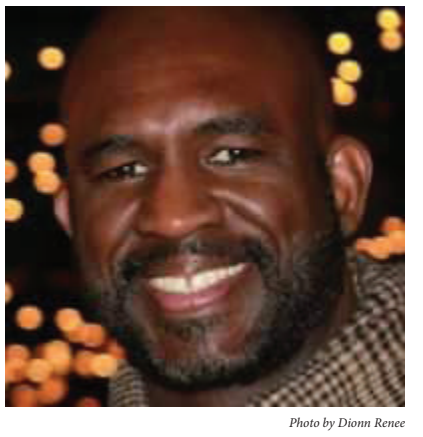


Photo by Dionn Renee

Author, screenwriter, playwright and film critic Paul Hood is a 1992 graduate of Harrisburg High School where he also enrolled at the Harrisburg Arts Magnet school; (now known as Capital Area School for the Arts) while there he studied television production and soon developed an interest in writing. At the age of 22 Hood published his first short story entitled 'Rider in Rearview' in the motorcycle enthusiast quarterly, Long Riders Magazine. Soon afterward he published several others: The Wilting of Her [Skive Magazine]; They Were There: a Foolish Revolution [CoffeeCramp Magazine].A lover of film, Hood is known for his insightful film analysis and lectures on cinema, having lectured at Central Penn College and Harrisburg University. He is one of the region's most prolific playwrights, publishing his first play (Aldous Remembers) in 2012, a best seller and Editor's Choice Award winner with the online based London/South Africa publisher Off the Wall Plays. Hood is a member of Playwrights Alliance of Pennsylvania.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

DESPITE THESE MARKS
Ephrata Main Theatre
Dec. 4, 7:30 Reception, 9 p.m. Show

Special 2015 World AIDS Day live presentation of locally written and produced Despite These Marks. Three local theatre and playwright advocates Josh Dorsheimer, Nicole Weerbrouck and Hal Matroni have collected real life stories of people surviving and living with HIV - both local individuals and national figures. Their stories are re-enacted on stage. Proceeds benefit Despite These Marks, Alder Health Services, and BCEFA. Cocktail reception before show included. Tickets $25

STRAIGHT NO CHASER
Hershey Theatre
December 6, 3 & 8 PM

Hershey Theatre brings back the famous a cappella group Straight No Chaser and their fifth full-length release, "The New Old Fashioned Tour." This will be their biggest headline tour to date. Tickets: Hershey Theatre Box Office; 717-534-3405

DICKENS' A CHRISTMAS CAROL
adapted by Edward Alsedek
Open Stage of Harrisburg
Dec. 13, 7 p.m.

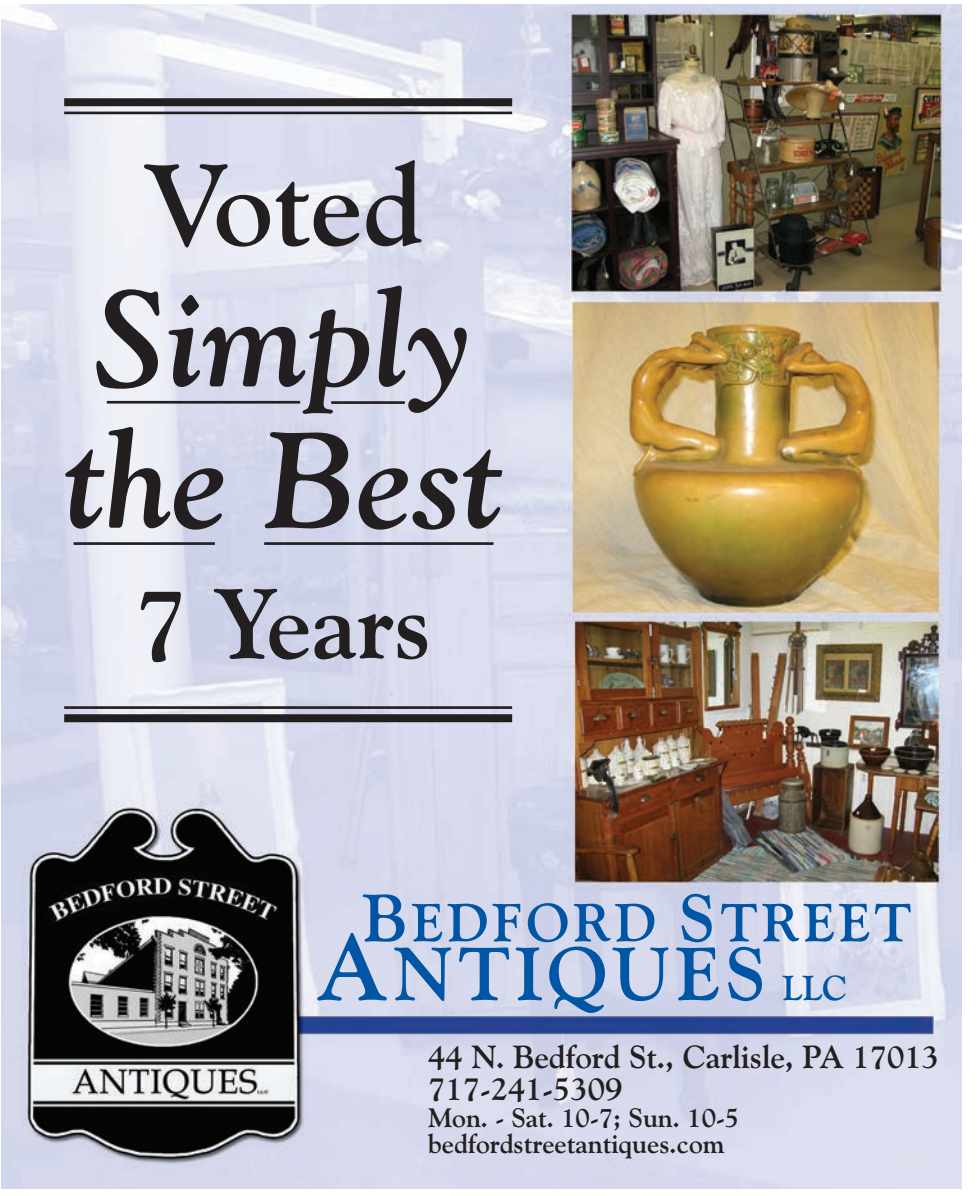
Ebenezer Scrooge returns for a one-night-only staged reading, benefiting Open Stage. Charles Dickens' classic story follows Ebenezer Scrooge's journey with the three ghostly spirits that visit him on Christmas Eve. Tickets: 717-232-OPEN (6736)

REVISIT STEPPENWOLF
The Born To Be Wild Tour
Whitaker Center Sunoco Theater
Nov. 28, 8 p.m.

The band consists of Original Steppenwolf member Danny Ironstone on Keys, Glen Bui who has played in several lineups with Original members of Steppenwolf. Tickets: 717-214-ARTS (2787)

NATIONAL CIRCUS & ACROBATS
of the People's Republic of China
Strand Theatre
Nov. 15, 2 p.m.

This tour features "Peking Dreams." Colorfully costumed acrobats and contortionists defy gravity with impressive circus and acrobatic acts, such as solo trapeze, aerial silk, diving through rings, and many more. Tickets: 717-337-8200



Holiday Romances

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book reviews

By Deborah Battisti
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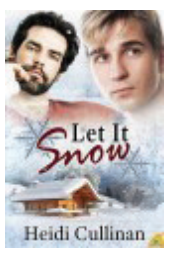
Chasing a Brighter Blue by Gerri Hill

Reagan Bryant is only interested in forgetting the recent past, and Shelby Sutton doesn't trust women, because they seem to be more interested in her money than in her. Both are guests at a Christmas destination wedding in Colorado, where their families hope they will connect, but friendship doesn't seem likely, let alone love.

Sibling Rivals by Devon Summer

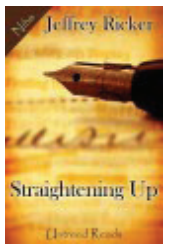
Peter Stevens was accustomed to being eclipsed by his "perfect" older brother, Mark. But when Mark came out to their parents one Christmas vacation, it was his turn to be the black sheep. Even more surreal was Peter's brief encounter with his brother's boyfriend, Colin, and an attraction that only gets stronger as time goes on…

Let it Snow by Heidi Cullinan



Frankie Blackburn is stuck in Logan Minnesota during a record-breaking snowfall. Being rescued by three sexy lumberjacks is fine as a fantasy, but in reality the biggest of the bears is awfully cranky and seems ready to gobble Frankie right up.

Straightening Up by Jeffrey Ricker



(eBook) When Michael's mother comes for Christmas, Greg must turn himself into a "roommate" instead of a boyfriend. Things would be easier if Michael would finally come out to her, but until he gets the guts to do that, it's up to Greg to do some straightening up.

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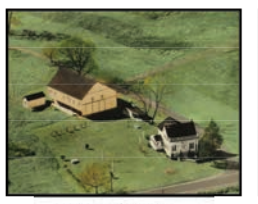
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REVIEW:

Stonewall, A White Washing of History

By William Burton

On Friday, June 27, 1969, shortly before midnight, two detectives from Manhattan's Sixth Precinct along with a few other officers, entered the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar on Christopher Street in New York's Greenwich Village. They were there to conduct another routine raid on this inviting target, a bar known for its mafia connections and operating without a liquor license. Stonewall offered dancing and scantily clad go-go boys, and its patrons were mainly young and non-white. Many were drag queens and runaways living across town in the East Village. What the police didn't expect was the patrons' reaction to the raid that night. Fighting broke out, and riots ensued over four nights. This was the night that the world exploded, and sparked a grassroots Gay Liberation movement.

Roland Emmerich, the openly gay director of disaster movies like The Day After Tomorrow, Independence Day, and 2012, has made Stonewall into a would-be epic film of this historic event. Emmerich and screenwriter Jon Robin Baitz have combined historical fact, fiction and urban legend to create this production. The film does a good job of depicting the atmosphere of the repressive late 1960s, when homosexual behavior between consenting adults was illegal in New York. At any moment, the police could descend upon a gay bar, round up the patrons, and haul them off. The film exposes the street people, drag queens, sex-workers, and excessive police brutality.

In re-creating this story, Emmerich and Baitz have created a group of characters to play out this event. Central to the story is fictional Danny Winters (Jeremy Irvine of War Horse), an all-American white boy from Indiana, thrown out of his house by his father (a high school football coach), for being gay. Danny goes to New York and is befriended by Ray a.k.a Ramona (Jonny Beauchamp), an androgynous, volatile Puerto Rican who unrequitedly falls in love with Danny, but still helps him navigate through his early beginnings in New York.

The film goes back and forth between Danny's early life in Indiana and his experiences in New York. It is here that the film becomes problematic. We spend a large portion of the film watching this "Abercrombie and Fitch" - style model go through the horrors of gay oppression, police brutality, and being pimped out by Stonewall's bar owner, while shunning off the advances of Ray. Danny does however, fall for another overtly white masculine male, a character named Trevor (Jonathon Rhys Meyers). Somehow, it would be impossible for the strong-jawed Danny to be with the effeminate Ray, but only someone equally manly as Trevor. Ray, however, is the far more interesting and complex character, and he is wonderfully played by Beauchamp. Of the real life players in the actual Stonewall events, Ray, along with his friends, Queen Cong, and Little Orphan Annie come the closest to representing the actual participants in the real saga.

But the biggest distortion of the film comes with the actual raid and riots. The film shows the bar owner and drag queen, Marsha P. Johnson (actual participants) being put in a paddy wagon as the police are hauling the patrons out of the bar. (True) As a lesbian is being forced into a police car, (True) a brick is thrust into Danny's hand which he throws into a window, starting the riot. (False) The bar owner and drag queen escape. (False) A riot ensues, that night. (True) Four hundred policemen arrive to fight the crowds of over 2,000. (False, not that night) Emmerich has condensed and rewritten history with his retelling of this key event. He has consolidated four nights of rioting into one night, and made the main protagonist a white man. This is by far the biggest outrage in Emmerich's recounting of the Stonewall Riots.

Here's what actually happened: All the patrons were ushered out of the bar by the police. The bar owner, plus the bouncer and three drag queens were all put into the paddy wagon and hauled off. As the last person out of the bar (a lesbian) was pulled out, and forced into the police car, she swung at the officer and called out to the crowd, "why don't you guys do something!" At that point, someone threw a brick, and the crowd started reacting, attacking the police. More people started to gather, and the fighting continued until 4 am. Over the following three nights, the protests continued, with shouts of "Gay Power" and "Save Our Sister." On the second night, over 400 helmeted policemen in tactical gear showed up to confront the crowds approaching 2,000. Emmerich has taken this compelling and complex story, condensed into a single night, whitewashed it, and therefore denied lesbian and gay history its dramatic retelling.

The Stonewall Riots were a seminal point in Gay American history - a story as compelling as Selma, Schindler's List, or Lincoln. This film was directed by a gay man and written by a gay man with an intent to educate the public about gay history. But in doing so, they have left out major parts of the event and altered the facts. They have white-washed the story, cast a young white man as the central character, created a fictionalized tale about him, and vastly ignored the Latinos and drag queens, whose story would have been equally as interesting. Emmerich failed to re-create the valiant struggle that evolved over four days that ignited the gay liberation movement. For the millions that do not the know the real struggle and story, we are left with this distorted version. We will now have to wait for someone else to take on this noble task. Someday, it will still make for a ground breaking film worthy of its history.

In the meantime, until an historically accurate dramatic rendition of Stinewall is produced, Stonewall Uprising (2010), an 80 minute documentary history directed by Kate Davis and David Heilbroner, and written by David Carter and David Heilbroner, tells the story of the massive police raid in a historically accurate way.

William Burton is currently working with the History Project of the LGBT Center of Central PA, researching and writing about Gay History. He received his Bachelor's and Master's Degree in History from the University of Massachusetts, Boston, with a concentration in Gay History.

Movie posters

May 30, 2014 announcement - From far left, Tim Gill, Gill Foundation founder; Corey Johnson, New York City District 3 City Council member; US Secretary Sally Jewell.

Central Voice photo

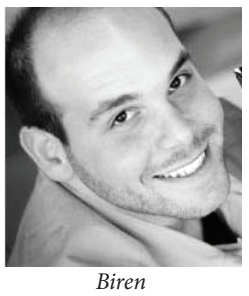
Next Step for Historic Stonewall Inn

U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Congressman Jerrold Nadler, the National Parks Conservation Association, Human Rights Campaign, elected officials, advocates and community members Sept. 20 launched a campaign to designate Stonewall Inn as the first ever national park site honoring America's LGBT history. The historic Stonewall Inn, 53 Christopher Street between Seventh Avenue and Waverly Place, is the 1969 site of The Stonewall Riots which, among other events, began the modern day LGBT civil rights movement. The next step follows the May 30, 2014 announcement by US Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell to include LGBT contributions to the country's history.

There are more than 400 national parks in America, two-thirds of which are dedicated to sites of cultural and historic significance. In Seneca Falls, New York, Women's Rights National Historical Park tells the story of the first Women's Rights Convention held there in July 1848. The Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail in Alabama traces the march led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the struggle for civil rights. A national park for Stonewall would tell the story of the LGBT community's fight equal rights in America.

Chamber Hires Executive Director; President Young Leads Renewed Effort

By Central Voice



Biren

Young

Brad Biren was recently hired as executive director of the Central Pennsylvania Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce. He is the organization's first paid staff member.

With 2016 approaching, "We strive to engage members to help them achieve their goals as we work toward LGBT business equality," Harry Young, president, Central Pennsylvania Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, tells *Central Voice*.

Founded in 2007, the organization "experienced significant, consistent growth in both membership and impact," according to a news release. "Hiring an executive director will ensure the organization's sustained growth through focused dedication to its members and mission."

'"Brad brings a wealth of knowledge and varied experience in business and with nonprofit organizations, offering a fresh perspective to our organization as we work to advance our mission." Young said.

Russ Boggs, the chamber's current treasurer and founding president said, "Brad's legal background and impressive experience make him a true asset to our organization."

Biren grew up in New York City, attended Cornell University before pursuing his law degree at the University of Iowa. A child of immigrants, Brad was raised surrounded by entrepreneurs and small business owners. Before moving to Hershey with his husband, an assistant professor of music at Lebanon Valley College, Brad had his own New Jersey law and consulting practice.

He is active in the Pennsylvania Bar's LGBT Rights Committee and has experience providing management support to the nonprofit sector.

With a current membership of 140, the organization celebrates it's annual membership dinner meeting Jan. 27 Hershey Hotel. Members comprise individuals, professionals, small businesses, nonprofits, and large corporations.

"Benefits vary by membership level, Young explains. As a National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce affiliate, the local chamber offers members benefits including member-to-member discounts.

"We also offer business building services relevant to a member's needs which vary by member," Young says. For example, "we provide insight into marketing to the LGBT segment and how to build an inclusive environment both for consumers and employees."

Membership in the chamber, Young explains, allows LGBT owned and operated businesses to attain LGBTBE Certification, which can help them unlock corporate supply chain spending. The LGBTBE Certification initiative has grown exponentially in recent years, and over one third of Fortune 500 companies now include LGBTBE Certification in their supply chain diversity spending. A key component of advancing LGBT business equality, Young says, is "growing the number of certified LGBTBEs in our region. We will continue to focus on that."

One of the primary ways members can help is by supporting one another, Young says. "I love that our members are committed to doing business with fellow members and firmly believe that when we all do well, we all do well," he points out.

Regarding advocacy, Young notes that "We're seeing businesses sign on to support the PA Fairness Act", legislation currently under consideration in the state General Assembly that provides basic civil rights protections for housing, employment, and public accommodations. The chamber has partnered with PA Competes, a coalition focused on passage of the act, to encourage businesses to support the PA Fairness Act.

"It's that sort of advocacy that will help us achieve equality in our state," Young says.

Gay Rights Good for Business *cont'd from pg. 1*

County areas," he explains.

As he moves through the region, Liacos works with a minority that has often been silent when it comes to contacting legislators. "We're encouraging LGBT individuals to write letters, make phone calls, send email, to let their House and Senate representatives know they have gay voters and tax payers in their districts," he says. The often told yarn is that elected officials justify not supporting basic gay civil rights by saying "there are no gay people in my district. We don't hear that much anymore. There is a human face on this issue now," Liacos says.

Local faith communities are also supporting the legislation.

Church leaders and members tell Liacos they support the legislation "because of their faith, not in spite of their church's teachings." Still, there is pushback from religious coalitions who fear passage will require them to, for example, marry a same-sex couple. Their fears persist in spite of the fact that the legislation clearly states there are no such requirements.

More needed

About one-third of state residents are already protected on a local level by ordinances passed by their respective units of government. Equality Pennsylvania's web site indicates that 34 municipalities have implemented policies to end discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in matters of employment, housing, and public accommodations. Still, discrimination persists without statewide protections. For example, Pennsylvania data provided by the state's transgender community indicates that 74% of that population has experienced discrimination in the workplace.

In all, twenty-one states and Washington, DC – including every state in the Northeast except Pennsylvania – have enacted policies to end discrimination against LGBT people.

The bill rests on the tried and true assumption that an inclusive workplace environment will increase Pennsylvania's ability to attract and retain a quality workforce. Pennsylvania employers from across the state have joined academic institutions and non-profit organizations in pledging support for the legislation.

Business support makes sense, Gehler explains. "Pennsylvania needs to stop the brain drain of young, talented individuals." That goal is reflected in state-specific data showing that among 18-29 year olds in general, the number one factor motivating their support of political candidates is that candidate's positions on social issues. One among them is LGBT civil rights. Even individuals who are not themselves gay "don't want to live in a state that does not protect their friends, siblings, old college roommates" Gehler says.

Business gets it. Thus the campaign's "compete" angle - a rust belt state like Pennsylvania with an aging population and severe brain drain competes best if it eliminates discrimination, if it creates a 21st Century economic environment in which employees want to live.

Many businesses have signed a pledge to support the Fairness Act which states: "As employers of thousands of Pennsylvanians in every region of the state, we believe the best way to foster and support a growing economy is to attract the best and brightest talent to work. Successful businesses across the nation understand the importance of fostering a workplace that is welcoming to all people. We believe updating Pennsylvania's nondiscrimination law will make the state a stronger economic competitor in attracting the highly skilled millennial workforce."

"Pennsylvania businesses are engaged in a highly competitive war for talent," says Audrey Russo, CEO, Pittsburgh Technology Council.

"This legislation not only provides basic protections for our employees, but it also showcases Pennsylvania as a Commonwealth that is serious about attracting the world's most diverse and creative workforce."

Local Support

"An inclusive Pennsylvania is a more economically vibrant Pennsylvania," said David E. Black, CEO, Harrisburg Regional Chamber & CREDC, Pennsylvania Competes coalition members.

"This legislation will help Pennsylvania attract a talented workforce and will make Pennsylvania a location of choice for entrepreneurs and companies to locate and expand their businesses and the jobs that come with them."

Dr. John 'Ski' Sygielski, president, Harrisburg Area Community College, says, "I see the Pennsylvania Fairness Act advancing our education and training efforts to ensure all of our 20,000 students, including our LGBT students, avoid discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity." By approving this legislation, he says, "Pennsylvania can be assured that it will be able to attract and maintain a rich and diverse employment pool of individuals."

The Central Pennsylvania Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce is partnered with PA Competes. "It's that sort of advocacy that will help us achieve equality in our state," chamber president Harry Young says.

All 23 Fortune 500 companies located in Pennsylvania have sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression nondiscrimination policies. On the federal level there is no LGBT civil rights protections written into law, although months ago a move was afoot to amend the Civil Rights Act and Fair Housing Act to include gay protections.

www.pennsylvaniacompetes.org

See following page for list of the supporters of the PA Fairness Act.

Chamber on the move

By Bill Krenz

Central Pennsylvania Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce

The chamber's November Mixer is Nov. 17 at the Kresvky Center in Harrisburg and is sponsored by the Harrisburg Gay Men's Chorus and Central Pennsylvania Womyn's Chorus.

The chamber's December Mixer is Dec. 9 at Goldcrafter's Corner, Jonestown Rd.

The chamber's annual membership dinner meeting is Jan. 27 at Hershey Hotel.

The October Mixer was Oct. 14 at the Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association and was sponsored by Press and Journal Publications, publisher of *Central Voice.*

The September Mixer was Sept. 16 at the Neidig-Garber Science Center at Lebanon Valley College attended by the campus's student LGBT group and college administration.

Info: www.cpglcc.org

Martin Appointed to Diversity Commission

Equality PA executive director Ted Martin has been appointed Pennsylvania's Business Diversity Commission by Gov. Tom Wolf. Wolf recently created a commission to improve diverse and small business participation in state contracting opportunities and the overall economy. Martin will serve on the commission to ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people will be included in these new opportunities.

The commission's Advisory Council on Diversity, Inclusion and Small Business Opportunities council will advise the Governor's office on state contracting and grant opportunities; job creation initiatives, financing and bonding programs, business assistance and professional development programs. The commission directs the council and state agencies to consider policies and programs designed to increase the participation of small businesses and businesses owned or supported by minorities, women, veterans, disabled persons, and members of the LGBT community.

"There are more than 270,000 LGBT Pennsylvanians and many of them are small business owners who are participating in the state's economy. They deserve a voice in the policies that shape economic opportunity in their home state," Martin said.

Support for PA Fairness Act

• The most recent Susquehanna Research Poll found that 74% of Pennsylvanians support updating the law.

• More than 400 small businesses signed on to support the campaign to end discrimination against gay and transgender people.

• Currently, 89 percent of Fortune 500 companies have sexual orientation non-discrimination policies; while 66 percent have gender identity non-discrimination policies.

• The bishops of three Christian denominations in Pennsylvania have released public letters asking the state to update the discrimination laws to include gender identity and expression and sexual orientation.

• More than 600 clergy and more than 1000 lay faith leaders from more than 31 denominations have signed on to a moral statement in support of nondiscrimination.

• The Board of the PA Council of Churches voted in June of 2015 to send a statement to legislators asking them to protect LGBT people from discrimination in Pennsylvania.

• The AFL- CIO released a public statement in support of protecting gay and transgender people from discrimination.

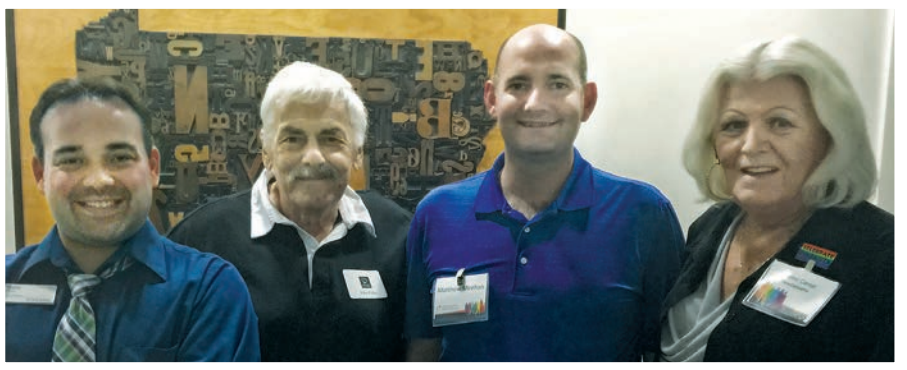
• The Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, the Harrisburg Regional Chamber of Commerce, and the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce all support updating the law to protect gay and transgender people.

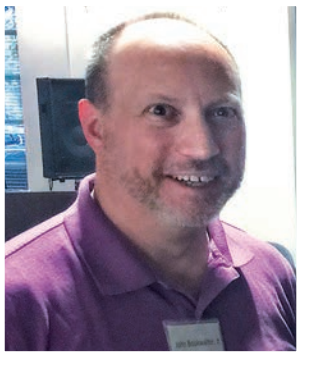
The Chamber Mixer hosts: Joseph Sukle, Press And Journal Publications, Steve Kozokas, Central Voice Account Executive, and Frank Pizzoli, Central Voice Publisher.

central VOICE

Chamber Mixer

The Central Pennsylvania Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce Mixer was held Oct. 14 at the Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association and was hosted by Press and Journal Publications, publisher of *Central Voice*.





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LGBT community center coalition

By Louie Marven
Executive Director

A Year of Learning About Our Communities

I was recently speaking with a classroom of social work students about the work of the LGBT Center, and we spent quite a bit of time talking about the experiences of LGBT seniors. We talked about the impacts of a lifetime of stigma, the ways our community's seniors have created families of choice, the history of activism and creating LGBT organizations, and economic insecurities among LGBT seniors.

I had to catch myself when talking about the lack of relationship recognition – the old talking point is that with the absence of marriage equality, those in our community who would otherwise want to get married to someone of the same legally-documented gender don't have access to a whole long list of rights that other people, those who want to marry someone documented as the "opposite" legal gender, can access.

Now we have to talk about that a little bit differently; we can look at the history of not being able to access marriage benefits as something that may have had a negative financial impact on older people in same-gender relationships, but we can refer to the pre-marriage equality days as the past, the dark ages.

"...we can refer to the pre-marriage equality days as the past, the dark ages."

Those of us providing education about the LGBT communities both in formal and informal settings have to continue to learn about these communities. We are under-researched, and we are rapidly changing with increased visibility and (arguably) increased acceptance, so those of us who are educators have to stay current and open to new perspectives. One way the LGBT Center helps to facilitate this in central Pennsylvania is convening a cohort of people who provide education about LGBT topics in more formal settings. We share challenges, successes, and resources quarterly.

Another way is through a recent opportunity to learn more about our communities in partnership with Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center, located in the Lehigh Valley, on the health experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and asexual people in our regions. A study for each region was commissioned by the LGBT Center with funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Health and Tobacco Free Northeast PA. Scout, Ph.D., from LGBT HealthLink, designed a questionnaire and helped guide survey administration.

We got some great information about LGBTQA people in our service area of Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, and York counties. 642 individuals completed the survey during a three-week collection period in June 2015.

Among those who took the survey, 90.6% of people had health care coverage, which was slightly higher than health care coverage among Pennsylvania adults, and about four of five survey respondents were out about their LGBTQA identity to one or more of their health care providers. On the other hand, more than one in four had a provider react poorly to their LGBTQA identity, including one in two transgender people having this experience. A little more than one in two transgender people always or often fear a negative reaction by a provider.

One finding that I thought was particularly interesting is where LGBTQA survey participants felt accepted. 83% of respondents said that their friends were very LGBTQA-friendly, which makes sense given that we have the most choice over the friends we keep. Fewer than half of LGBTQA respondents reported being very accepted in the workplace (47%), school (38%), birth families (36%), medical providers (26%), and neighborhoods (17%). Our communities feel the least accepted where we live and where we go for health care.

Also of interest, LGBTQA people in our region use tobacco and nicotine products at very high rates; 43% of respondents used these products in the past year. Cigarette smoking was higher among participants than the general state population – 35% in our study vs. 21%. Despite this large difference, only a third of respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that LGBTQA people smoke more than the general population. When ranking the top health issues for our communities, tobacco ranked tenth; mental health, suicide, and STDs/HIV were the top three according to survey respondents. Clearly there is a need to educate about the negative impacts of smoking on LGBTQA communities, and get friendly resources available for those who want to quit.

The more we know about our communities, the more tools we have to create and advocate for LGBT-relevant, LGBT-friendly, LGBT-welcoming services. If you would like to review further results of this study, email me at lmarven@centralpalgbtcenter.org.

The mission of the LGBT Center of Central PA is to create common ground for the LGBT community and allies in central Pennsylvania by providing services through educational, cultural, and community activities that foster wholeness.

Larry Kramer talks with Calvin Trillin

Oct. 3 the iconic Larry Kramer - founder of Gay Men's Health Crisis and ACT UP - talked with the iconic Calvin Trillin - T*he New Yorker* magazine writer since 1963 and *The Nation* regular - at *The New Yorker* Festival. Kramer's historical novel *The American People, A Search for My Heart* is causing quite a stir - Abraham Lincoln was gay, George Washington was in love with Alexander Hamilton, and that's just for starters. He's still at it - writing a sequel to *The Normal Heart* in addition to a new play in the works, plus a reprise of his play *The Destiny of Me,* and the continues working on a second volume of his *American People* book.

Top photo: Kramer and Trillin on stage. Bottom photo rom left: Kramer, his husband David Webster, Central Voice founder Frank Pizzoli, and Alan Kennedy-Shaffer. Central Voice photos

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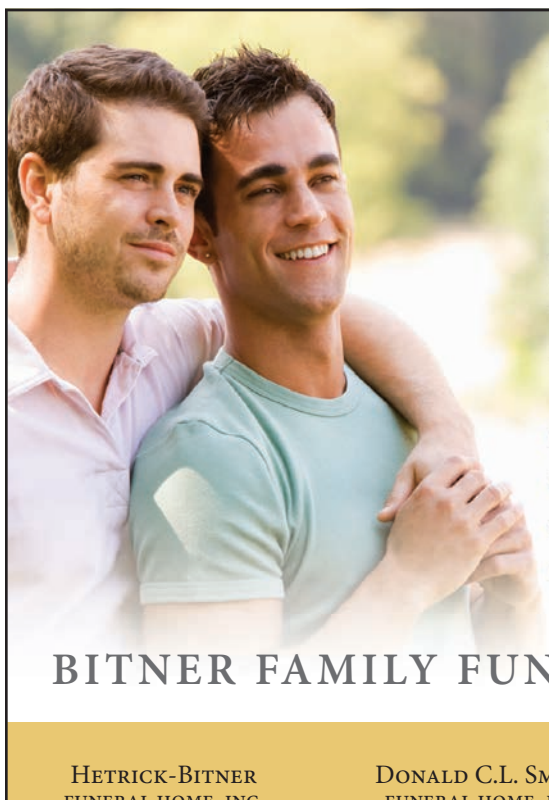

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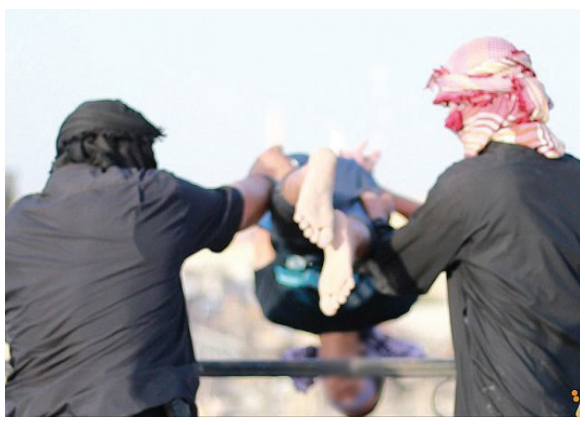
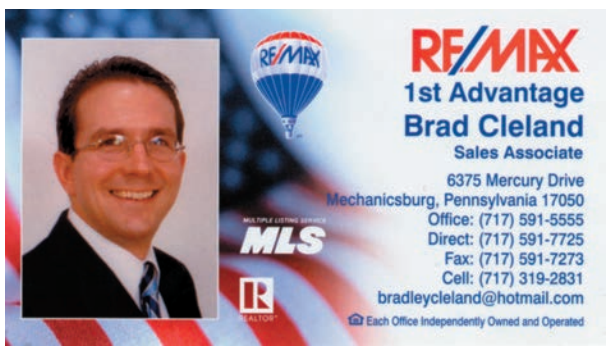


ISIS Executes at Least 39 Gay Men

The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, now known as OutRight Action International, recently reported to the united Nations the deaths of 39 gay men executed by ISIS. The deaths have been documented by OutRight Action International in a September 2015 report to the UN Security Council. ISIS have released photographs of militants hurling four men, accused of homosexuality, off the top of a building in Iraq.

marketplace



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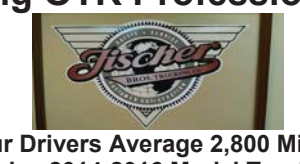

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What Guides Your Life?

making sense of life

By Dr. Terry Drew Karanen

Do you ever feel overwhelmed by how fast the world around us seems to be changing? Even long-held traditions are undergoing change. Recent polls, surveys and studies indicate Americans are more likely to say they are spiritual, not religious. A church or other religious organization is not always the center of our lives as they may have been in decades past. So where do we turn to for guidance in living our life in such changing times?

Sacred, spiritual writings are still a terrific source, but given that the study of spirituality has been my life work, I may be just a bit biased. In those studies, however, I've found similar teachings from all paths. Those beliefs teach us to follow some pretty simple concepts to have a life worth living.

The first is to decide what we want. That's the most difficult part for most people! We often know what we don't want, but are hard-pressed to say what we do want. Ever hear someone say they want a million dollars or a Rolls Royce? Most of those who say things like that will never see the money or the car because they don't have a real belief they can have what they claim they want. Believing in the possibility of our desires is the first step toward fulfillment.

The second principle we must exercise is the ability to do what it is we say we want to do. In other words, we have to be convinced that we have the power to accomplish our goals. That doesn't mean we have to bully our way through life or step on people as we climb up the ladder of success. Rather, it implies that we have choice in our lives and the ability to move in the direction of our desires. A belief in God or a Higher Power can provide a basis for our support, but just knowing we living in a "user-friendly" universe can be just as comforting. It can stop us from doing what it takes to change our circumstances if we don't feel we are empowered to direct our lives.

We can't succeed if we aren't really invested mentally, emotionally, physically and psychologically in what we are doing. If we are only doing something – anything! – to please another person then the accomplishment will feel empty. Why? Because we are not consumed with the passion required for the contentment and satisfaction of true success. Each of us have at least one special, unique gift, something that we do differently and expertly like no one else. You probably already know what your ability is, whether or not you want to admit it or consciously use it. Find that and you'll have charted your course for more happiness and pleasure than you've ever thought possible.

It has been said that getting there is half the battle. That's true of working toward our goals or following our dreams. It's not a "once-n-done" kind of situation. Consummate musicians and athletes will attest to putting in hours upon hours of practice day in and day out to achieve their level of expertise. If we are to succeed in life we, too, must take the time to study so as to fill in any gaps in our knowledge and continuing hone our skills as we develop them.

> We can't just create a life purpose out of thin air.

Is it simple? Yes. Is it easy? No. It's a very simple concept, practicing our craft or way of life, no matter what that is. But the challenges of life and major set-backs can be discouraging and might even stop us in our tracks.

If we have a clear purpose in life we will be able to pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off and get back onto whatever horse we've decided to ride into success, happiness and fulfillment. We can't just create a life purpose out of thin air. We must feel compelled to do what it is we say we want to do. We have to be driven to succeed in our endeavors, as if it is the most important thing in the entire world. Spoiler alert: It is.

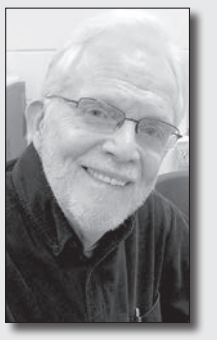
If we can combine possibility, power, passion, practice and purpose in the pursuit of our goals and dreams our success is assured. Why? Because nothing can stand in the way of that kind of drive, enthusiasm and commitment. Try it out for a week…or a year! Let me know how that works out for you.

Terry is an author, speaker, licensed social worker and flight attendant. He is also the director of Spirit, Mind and Body Foundation (spiritmindbodyfoundation.org).

Info: blog.terrydrewkaranen.com.

Ally in the Academy

By Trum Simmons
Harrisburg Area Community College



All of Us Need Some Transitioning

The T in LGBT has gotten a lot of attention lately, and rightly so. Thanks to television and social media, even people who weren't sure what LGBT is all about have taken notice.

A major celebrity comes out on national TV; a Netflix show featuring a transgender character wins an Emmy; the evening news brings viewers stories about prison inmates advocating in court for necessary hormone therapy—and winning. Time magazine publishes a cover featuring *Orange is the New Black* star Laverne Cox with the caption, "The Transgender Tipping Point." And the governor of Pennsylvania appoints a transgender woman to the position of physician general.

It is gratifying to talk with those who have had to hide their identity for so long, for their newfound freedom is liberating to those of us who are open to it. It is a gift.

At the same time we continue to attend Transgender Day of Remembrance gatherings on Nov. 20 every year and are reminded of the violence so many transgender persons face every day.

We all could stand to learn more about the complexities of gender. We all, including those who are happy with our assigned gender, feel the tensions and ambiguities of being male or female in our American culture.

Some years ago a colleague and I saw a TV talk show in which two guests advocated a National Gender Relief Day. We agreed that it would indeed be a relief to spend a day free from the cultural pressures of gender binaries in this country.

How often has a man heard the comment, "So-and-so is a real man," and worried he doesn't live up to that standard. The same goes for woman hearing the statement, "She's all woman," and feeling some self-doubt.

A piece in *The New Yorker* last year was headlined, "What is a Woman? The dispute between radical feminism and transgenderism."

Writer Michelle Goldberg led her story with an event in Portland, Ore., called Radfems Respond, during which participants explained why they regard transgender women as men. There's more to it, but basically they think a woman who has lived as a man before transitioning has led a life with all the privileges that go with being male, and therefore should still be considered a man.

On another front, women's colleges are confronting the challenges of allowing transgender students to attend. Several highly regarded women's colleges, including Bryn Mawr and Wellesley, have recently agreed to accept transgender students.

This is all well and good, but the issues the decision raised at Wellesley show that it's not all that easy. To begin with, the new admissions policy says the college will admit an applicant who "lives as a woman and consistently identifies as a woman."

But what about a person who has not been living so consistently? Many transgender people have a hard time doing this for a host of reasons. Perhaps a potential student has just recently transitioned, or has just begun transitioning—will she be rejected?

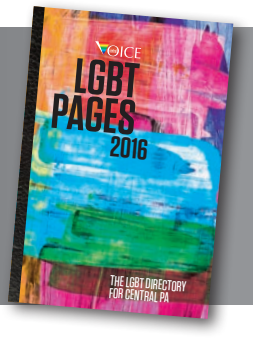
More to the point, what does Wellesley do about a student who came into the college as woman but is now transitioning into a man? A New York Times Magazine cover story last fall featured the challenges faced by trans men at the college. It was called "Sisterhood is Complicated," and for good reason.

Some two dozen trans men were attending Wellesley last year, and one ran for a student government seat, only to face opposition because of his gender. Many students didn't think it a good idea to have a man in a leadership position at a women's college.

The fact of trans men on campus was raising all kinds of questions. And what about students who were questioning their gender and expressing it in the way they presented themselves? Aren't women's colleges places where gender roles are closely examined and stereotypes questioned?

The increasing visibility of the T in LGBT challenges all of us who don't stand under that letter. Even many LGB people have their own problems with understanding and accepting the T, let alone many allies. We need to do some transitioning of our own to really understand what's going on. Yes, the T is complicated.

Central PA's only LGBT guide.



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Local Reaction:

Phila. Transgender Woman Attacked and Killed

By Central Voice

"Senseless" is what TransCentralPA president Joanne M. Carroll calls the recent murder of 22-year-old Kiesha Jenkins in the Hunting Park section of Philadelphia.

"Even though the police are saying it was possibly a robbery, the fact that she was beaten first and then shot tells me it was a hate crime," Carrol tells Central Voice.

Her death marks the 21st homicide of a trans-woman since January 1, 2015.

"These killings will continue for as long as trans-identified persons are marginalized," Carroll says.

"Discrimination against us continues to send the message that we are persons with no value, so getting rid of one more cannot be a big deal. She was a woman of color. Black lives matter and so do trans-lives," Carroll says.

At the 5th Annual Philadelphia Trans March held Oct. 10, Equality PA executive director Ted Martin, said "Violence against transgender women, and particularly transgender women of color, is too commonplace and it must stop."

Jenkins, of North Philadelphia, was dropped off on the 1300 block of Wingohocking Street around 2:30 a.m. Oct. 6. As she got out of the vehicle she was approached by at least five men who began to attack and beat her, according to police investigators.

After Jenkins fell to the ground, one of the men pulled out a gun and fired two shots, police said.

Jenkins was struck twice in the back as the suspects fled the scene. She was pronounced dead later in a hospital.

Police say it's too early to determine whether or not the incident was a hate crime.

"Right now we don't have any motive," said Philadelphia Police Captain James Clark. "We don't know if it's potentially a hate crime or if it was a robbery. We really don't know. It's too early in the investigation to tell."

At press time, police had spoken with Jenkins' family hoping to identify a motive. Philadelphia Police have offered a $20,000 reward for information leading to the capture of suspects.

TransCentralPA Topics

By Joanne Carroll
president of TransCentralPA

November of each year is marked with an event that in my heart of hearts wish we never needed to observe. The Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) will unfortunately be the day that we memorialize those murdered simply because they were doing their best to live authentically. On that day, we will sorrowfully conduct a candlelight vigil and recite the names and stories of victims of hate and transphobia.

At 5:30 p.m., Fri. Nov. 20, 2015 on the steps of the Capitol of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, members of TransCentralPA, along with friends, allies, community leaders, and legislators will gather to remember the lives of transgender identified persons brutally killed during the preceding 12 months.

Last year, as we recalled the names and stories of 15 persons slaughtered at the hands of brutal killers; and we discovered that in most cases the assailant or executioners were never identified. Thus, justice never comes to those who perpetrate these crimes. In addition, we know that the total number of homicides is never accurate because of inaccurate reporting or media bias.

Thus far, just since Jan. 1, 2015, 20 transgender women have been murdered, and by the time of this upcoming TDOR, the likelihood is that the number will increase. Their unfortunate deaths can be attributed to what should be an alarming feature. Each of these victims was a woman of color, and because of workplace discrimination, lack of access to public accommodation, fear of rejection by governmental agencies, and unemployment, were forced into sex work, simply to have a meal and a place to sleep other than a park bench.

This past June at the Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference, I was able to meet several young trans-girls from the streets of Philly. They were happy to be living authentically, but the lifestyle they were forced into, gave them an aura of sadness that I could readily sense. They were no different in many ways from any other of their peers; they looked for the light at the end of the long, dark tunnel, and had aspirations of complete and satisfying lives. How many of them will survive to realize their dreams is anyone's guess, but the odds are not in their favor.

The PA Fairness Act, as well as the federal Equality ACT are designed to combat the discrimination manifested in the lack of employment protections. I urge you to be an activist and communicate with your legislators at both the state and national level to support these efforts of ending discrimination.

However, because we still face violence against our trans-communities we need YOU to stand with us at the Transgender Day of Remembrance. The ceremony is not long, but it will likely change your life, your awareness of these tragedies will increase, and you will find yourself more capable of telling the story of transphobia.

Please, please, take a few moments of your time on Nov. 20, 5:30 p.m. on the steps of the Capitol and join us in this memorial event. Put the date on your calendar.

Joanne Carroll is president of TransCentralPA.

Bradbury-Sullivan Community Center Acquires New Building

Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center recently acquired 13,000 SF building at 522 W. Maple St., in Allentown as the location for their new community center.

Expected to open in early 2016, the building will provide direct services to members of the LGBT community, including cultural, educational and health promotion programs.

Rob Ritter, Weichert Realtors Allentown, acted as the buyer's agent by assisting in the property search and in negotiating its' purchase. He will also be supporting the center by donating a portion of his commission.

Lehigh Financial Group's Jeff Barber and Lewis Edwards arranged financing through People's First Federal Credit Union.

Attorneys Tim Brennan and Michael Recchiuti provided pro-bono legal services related to the acquisition. Design professionals including Don Kohn from Kohn Engineering, Michael Eversole at Barry Isett & Associates, Chris Brown at Brown Design Corps., Joe McCarthy of J&P Engineers, and Christopher Bleschmidt of Lock Ridge Engineering provided pro-bono support during the due diligence period.

The organization had previously expected to move forward with the redevelopment of 1021 W. Turner St., Allentown, however significant environmental conditions were identified during due diligence and the construction cost was too high.

"This property presents a better option for our community – the physical space is better, the cost is lower and we'll be able to open sooner" said Adrian Shanker, executive director, Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center.

"Non-profit financing is among the hardest to get done, nationally, so when you can get financing for an organization like this, it really speaks to the strength of that organization," Jeff Barber of Lehigh Financial Group said. "People's First did something not many lenders do for non-profits, but Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center is a very thorough organization. They have very strong management and organization."

The 2010 U.S. Census confirms that the vibrant LGBT community in the Lehigh Valley is growing at exponential rates. Over a ten-year period, Allentown saw a 55 percent increase in same-sex couples residing in the city, Bethlehem saw a 79 percent increase and Easton by 26 percent.

"The growing LGBT community brings with it a greater need for community resources, infrastructure and direct services," said Shanker. "We need a community center to provide the programs and services our community deserves."

Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center provides programs and services to strengthen and support the LGBT community across the Greater Lehigh Valley.

Info: www.bradburysullivancenter.org

Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center today announced the acquisition of a 13,000 SF building located at 522 W. Maple St., in Allentown as the location for their new community center.

Michael K. Lavers in Cuba last May. *Photo by Michael K. Lavers, Washington Blade*

Pope *continued from pg. 1*

Diocese's director of marriage and family ministries, said at the time.

In October, results were released in Rome at a synod, a meeting of bishops. Although not a public opinion survey, the endeavor is the first time the Vatican has asked bishops to query parish priests on parishioners' views in preparation for a synod.

"Early reports are that there will be no change church doctrine based on the survey results," Lavers explains. LGBT individuals will still be defined by the church as "intrinsically disordered". The church's definition of marriage will include only a relationship between one man and one woman.

Meanwhile, on the eve of the synod, high-ranking Vatican priest Father Krysztof Olaf Charamsa, who works for a Vatican office for protecting Catholic dogma came out as a practicing homosexual with a partner for 22 years. He told *Newsweek* he wanted to challenge the Church's "paranoia" as bishops met to discuss church outreach to gays, divorcees and more traditional Catholic families. He was fired the same day.

If there's one good result from the survey "it's that the church will take a pastoral care approach regarding gay issues which is better than being front and center as the gay community has been for some time now," Laver says. "It simply means they're going to be nicer to us," he says.

Laskowski did clarify in her earlier story that the survey (her emphasis) "is NOT to discuss any changes in doctrine. The purpose of the survey IS to learn what is currently happening in the churches and to look at what pastoral approaches might be most helpful."

It does not appear that being nicer or helpful includes the transgender community.

In a book called *Pope Francis: This Economy Kills*, the pontiff calls on Christians to preserve God's order of creation. In an interview with veteran Italian journalists Andrea Tornielli and Giacomo Galeazzi, the Pope compares genetic manipulation and nuclear weapons with gender theory, a theory that embraces transgender expressions of sexuality.

Meanwhile, according to a National Congregations Study from Duke University, the number of congregations allowing openly gay and lesbian members has increased from 38 to 48 percent since 2006. Twenty-seven percent of churches gave gay and lesbian congregants leadership roles in the same timeframe, an 8 percent jump.

Cuba

On Cuba, where Lavers travelled for 10 days last May, he notes that although gay visibility is allowed, "As with any issue regarding Cuba, it is a complex situation not deeply reported in the media".

Although Mariela Castro, Cuban President Raul Castro's daughter, is one of the most vocal LGBT activists in the country, there is no monolithic government position. "Mariela's influence is strong in Havana but not in the country's interior," Lavers clarifies.

"As with any issue regarding Cuba, it is a complex situation..."

Coherent national policies or political sentiments, except those promulgated by the government, are difficult to acjieve in Cuba. The Socialist nation has no real infrastructure, no Internet, no reliable communications network. In a previous story, political strategist Karl Fritsch described Cuba as "beautiful and complicated" after his 10-day visit there.

Lavers had the same experience when he traveled into the countries outer region.

"I went 400 miles outside of Havana to Las Curas, a provincial capital," Lavers says. He found citizens mounting a street rally. "They shouted 'Yes to Socialism. No to homophobia'".

"Gay or straight, if you criticize the government, workers on the job are ostracized. People are detained for questioning," Lavers says. "There is some awareness of LGBT issues in Cuba and conditions there, at least in Havanna, are not as bad as other Latin American nations," Lavers points out. That's the point about Cuba at this moment it faces tremendous change."Nothing in Cuba is black and white."

Health Needs *cont'd from pg. 9*

HIV prevalence was 8.7% for cisgender men, and zero transgender people reported being HIV-positive. Regular HIV testing was low. Excluding HIV-positive participants, 41.3% of cisgender men and 21.3% of transgender people received their last HIV test within the past year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that high-risk groups get tested for HIV at least once a year, and more often for sexually active high-risk groups. *www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/msm/index.html*

• ***Tobacco Use & Opinions***

In the past year, 43.1% of participants used any tobacco/nicotine products, and this significantly varied by gender: transgender people (54.8%) reported higher tobacco use than cisgender men (37.4%) and women (42.2%).

Specifically, cigarette smoking was higher among LGBTQ participants than the general Pennsylvanian population (35% versus 21%, respectively; 2013 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System). LGBTQ people had little knowledge about LGBTQ smoking disparities: only 33.0% strongly or somewhat agreed that LGBTQA people smoke more than the general population. About 3 out of 5 participants were strongly unappreciative that the tobacco industry advertises to the LGBTQ community; and over one-half strongly or somewhat agreed that pride celebrations should be smoke-free events.

LGBTQ smokers overwhelmingly wanted to quit (94.8%). When asked how they would quit, willingness to use effective cessation techniques was low: 31.9% of smokers would go to their health care provider, and 16.0% would enroll in a smoking cessation class or program; however, only 10.4% would use the quitline, and over one-fifth of smokers did not know where to go for cessation assistance.

On a positive note, LGBTQ participants used smokeless tobacco (e.g., chew or snuff) less than the general Pennsylvanian population (1% vs. 4%; 2013 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System).

• ***Cancer***

The lifetime prevalence of cancer was 6.8% among LGBTQ participants, and this was significantly higher among cisgender men (9.4%) than transgender people (2.4%), but both were similar to the prevalence among transgender women (6.8%). Participants reported moderately high levels of cancer screenings. Among participants 50 years or older: 76.9% were up to date with colonoscopies; 83.6% of those assigned female at birth were up to date with mammograms; and 86.1% of those assigned male at birth were up to date with prostate exams. However, half of all participants who were assigned female at birth reported not being up to date with cervical Pap smears. Only 17.9% of cisgender women, 10.7% of cisgender men, and 3.3% of transgender people reported ever having had an anal Pap smear. All LGBTQ participants believed there was a high need for a variety of LGBTQ-welcoming practices for cancer care, including survivor support groups, caregiver support groups, inclusive hospital policies, and legal planning at hospitals.

• ***Perceptions of LGBTQ Community Health Issues***

Mental health, suicide, and STDs/HIV were ranked the top three health problems of the LGBTQ communities. Notably, there was very little awareness that tobacco use is a major health burden for the LGBTQ communities: tobacco was ranked as 10th most important overall.

Passing the Test

continued from page 6

to disclose his HIV status that was higher than my moral imperative to protect myself. Perhaps you could even be right. However, even after all this time, I still haven't decided.

What I have decided, now having lived more than half of my life with HIV, is that I did the right thing for myself by forgiving him. I believe he never intended to transmit HIV, so forgiving him wasn't too difficult for me.

The anger I felt toward him in the first few years after I seroconverted was soon trumped by the experience of now being in his shoes. Not pretty. Rejection was everywhere. The stigma was stifling. I now understood.

And I still understand. Little has changed when it comes to HIV stigma. Not only has the virus proven resistant to a cure, it also has resisted decades of attempts to eradicate the stigma surrounding it.

Strangely enough, I believe testing regularly for HIV would do wonders in stomping out stigma. If everyone did it, and did it often, folks would finally start feeling like it's not so scary. Peer pressure at its best.

Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr. is the editor-in-chief of POZ magazine

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